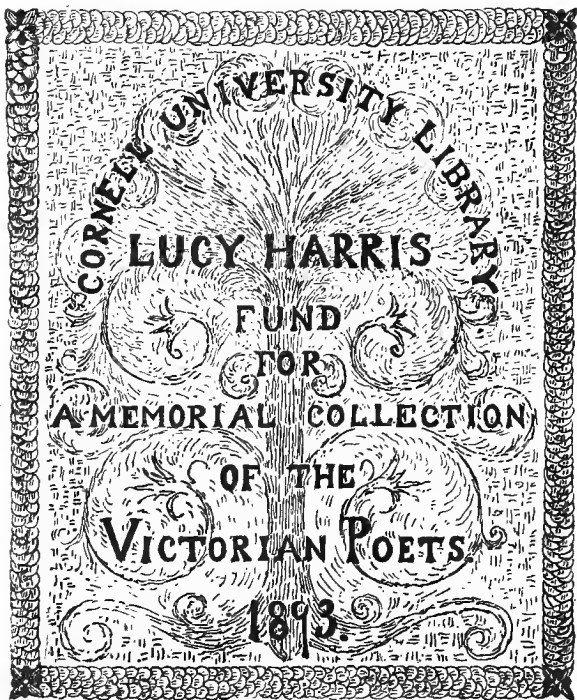




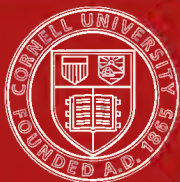
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QUORSUM? THE CRY OF HUMAN SUFFERING
A Poem

LONDON: RIVINGTONS

KING ALFRED'S DREAMS

AND OTHER POEMS

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To

THE MOST HONOURABLE
CONSTANCE, MARCHIONESS OF LOTHIAN

YOUR KIND PERMISSION
GIVEN TO ME TO DEDICATE THESE POEMS
TO YOU
CAUSES ME AT ONCE TO HOPE
THAT THEY ARE WORTHY
AND TO WISH
THAT THEY WERE WORTHIER
OF THE HONOUR

PREFACE

OF the old Northern mythology, so far as it was the mythology of our English forefathers, so much is lost that it is impossible to know what was remembered of it in King Alfred's days. I have therefore preferred to imagine that it was all but forgotten, and that he learnt about it, as he learnt descriptions of the nations of the North, from Norwegian lips. The Norse gods are thus referred to in their Norse names. Of the Greek mythology King Alfred learnt what he knew through Latin writers, but here I have taken a somewhat analogous liberty by giving their Greek names. A lover of Greek could hardly do otherwise. Notes, with the few explanations that seemed needful, will be found at the end of the volume.

The legendary voice referred to on the second page is the entry under the year 571, A.D., in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle recording the conquest of the Vale of Aylesbury, the watershed, and the Ouse Valley down to Bedford, along the lines of the Icknield and the Engle Ways.

F. W. RAGG.

Κύριε . . . σὰ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐκ τῶν σῶν δεδώκαμεν σοι.

1 *Chron.* xxix. 14.

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KING ALFRED'S DREAMS

A BASTION of a long escarpment's line
Was that whereon the king, to halt compelled
By pain, dismounting stood—stood all alone,
Stood leaning on his spear while yet the rein
He grasped, and strove for breath which pain that clamped
His breast withheld—'mid wan memorials stood
Of spring and dying summer. Clustered bells,
Their purple gone, held yet their infant store
For spring to foster ; seed of gentian, sheathed,
Was in its hooded casket ; and that flower
Of ancient ice, the Pasch-anemone,
To winds its birthlings gave. Contemplative,
The coroneted thistle's musky head
Bent moody down, its coronet retained,
But somewhere in the dreamy past was lost
Its crimson glory. Cistus straggled there,
And thyme, and yellow clover lifted up
Its purple seed, its hope for years to be.

Behind the king the woods through which he came
Covered the hills, but were debarred approach
Unto the bastion's pride and stubborn steep ;

But at its foot the track on other woods
Came slant, and where it came upon them met
A road whose long white track from end to end
Along the escarpment ran, memorial wrought
By unremembered peoples, whose dead steps
Through untold centuries had worn its track
Upon the silent land that was their tomb.
And on its ancient course thereunto paved
Had moved the heavy roar of Roman war ;
And on it, when no more the Roman arms
Were equal to their distant pledges, led
Cuthwulf, a far-off father of the king,
His English bands, to victory wont, and won
The valley's meads and lands ; and left behind
One legendary voice alone to tell
To after-days the struggle's faded tale.

But legend now nor memories held the king ;
Pain's far-off stare was his ; his form was bent
As clamped with iron strength of bands ; his face
No thought of poesy illumed, no joy
Of danger's thrill, no student's eager glance.
One mood remained, one mood of all his wont :
The mood of one who prays ; but now 'twas prayer
Of anguish, not of rapture, gasped and low.

So stood he. Autumn's sun sent o'er the heaven
From its low couch of eve a benison
Of parting, in the glow of which, to mood

Of splendour thrilled, the distant uplands met
Their coming fate of darkness. Later rose
The moon, like one who seeks a lover lost,
And mounted up the violet haze ghost-sad,
Too sad, too pale, to light the moving mists
That stole, uncertain whence, like aimless doubts,
And wandered low about the valley's floor,
Its brooding woods and acres, sickle-reaped,
And moated meads with day's last memories dim.

But, as the moon still higher clomb the heaven,
Its stricken pallor to benignant glow
Was changed, that shed upon the darkened scene
A pallid joy—the joy of sympathy.

Till eve in night's enfolding dark was lost
Dured on the king's hard strife with pain, nor when
In rarer paroxysm waned the pain
Did hue of strength retinge his face, nor fire
Relight his wearied eyes whose drooping lids
Lay heavy o'er them. But his limbs grew loose,
And, fallen back upon the dewy turf,
Whose dew was autumn's, saturating, cold,
He lay, and on his elbow propped his head.

Can that be smoke which, yonder floating, wraps
The lowland trees? Is that he hears the march
Of armies? Shrieks are they which ring confused
Amid the general din that fills his ears?

What? once again the Dane, and Wessex snared,
And he supine—its king?

Almighty God!

Dost Thou look down on unregarded woe,
Or unregarded rise its cries to Thee?
What crime is his that in unkingly sloth
He lies, and sees his country reddened o'er
With that worst blush of shame its people's blood,
And hears upon its air that helpless cry,
That bitterest cry of anguish—woman's cry
The sport of shame, and child's the sport of spear?

His horror forced him up; but feebly back
Again he fell, and from his hand, that shook
With aspen-quiver, fell the loosened rein,
And, loosened, homewards rushed his frightened steed.

Nay, king, the din is not the din of war;
Thine own disordered pulse is clamouring,
And sequestration's signal, given by swoon
With thine impeded blood, assails thine ear,
Nor is it smoke thou seest, but moonlit mist.

Too dire that agitation's force. He sank,
And fever, like a foe in ambush, seized
Upon his weakest moments, but approached
With vision to disguise its fatal aim.

* * * * *

It is that spot amid the marsh-lands lone,
Ethelney, sacred home where Victory gained
New childhood, and Defeat, who bore her, died.
Upon the low green brow a mystic hand
Fixes the battle's ensign, and from far
He sees approach across the dark morass
Assembling groups. From many points they come,
Towards one they wend, until the little isle
Is thickly forested with ranks of war.

And then he heard, or felt them as his thoughts,
Mood-rousing words, which nerved to fight and bade
His men confront their foe as if defeat
Were but the sequel of a loss deserved,
As if the patriot's death were more than life
When life was duty shunned. Be this their thought,
That whoso claimed that manfulness were his,
To him was foremost right to be defence
Of child and woman, save the right to guard
From all profaning feet the church of Christ.

Then Ethelney became a shadowy rise
Far in the distance west and south. For soon
The advancing ranks were pressing over wold
And down. And everywhere new throngs fell in.

From battle unto battle of his past
The mystic order led. And when the fields
Shook with their footfalls, from the earth arose

Dead warriors with their lips to greeting open,
Whence never voice came forth. Silent they filled
The thickening ranks.

And where the musters passed
The acres which were God's, awoke from death
Loved faces that were lost. Thanes once withheld
By shame from fear, who filled the memoried past
With valorous thought and valorous deed, uprose
And greeted with surprise of smile their king.
So each new mile augmented the array,
Until its multitude about him stood
Upon the chalky hills, as stood the trees
In evening's light, a forest's multitude,
Ready for battle's signal. And beyond,
Along the line of heights, the distance filled
With gathering forms that came from leagues afar,
Forms unremembered, forms of nought but dream.

And all the valley filled, until it seemed
Sheening with spear and Danish sword and shield ;
And close and closer came the great array,
A tide that clomb the steep ; and whilst it came
Gathered, like bitter memories, slaughtered jarls
And armoured kings and multitudinous foes
From all the battles past, who as they joined
Grinned with the savage grin with which they met
Their death. And murmuring rose, like far-off winds,
The sounds of distant myriads crowding on,

Fit force to shock the armies of a world.
And lo, but half an arrow's flight away,
White-robed and kneeling, mass priests and a king !
The brother at whose side so oft of old
He shared the joy of victory, the shame,
The wrath, of battles lost ! O Ethelred
Beloved, O brother gone, thou here ? Bent low,
As in the past, to song of mass and prayer,
Art thou, then, come to rise at prayer's late end,
And in the inspiration of thy prayer
To lead as thou wast wont the onset on ?

Nay, king, for thou, and not the dead, art king,
And years to him forbidden by death are thine,
And hosts and strength and wars. 'Tis *thine* to lead ;
'Tis *his* to pray for victory and for thee.

As from the lips a cry of sudden joy
Bursting, and as in accents that were his,
He heard a shout, and in his lifted hand
Uprose his sword, the onset's ensign, bright
With sunlight's flash. And then around him brake
The roaring war-shout. English arms rose up
And weaponed hands, and waved. As if the trees
Brandished their swaying tips in sudden light,
Thus waved the uplifted weapons flashing clear.

Then silence, momentary gap ; and then,
Rolling on either hand from near to far

Like some progressing wave, the war-shout ran,
And rose the glitter, till, far off, the miles
Dimmed them to murmuring wind and feeble gleam.
And when the shouting ceased, across the brow
The mighty moving cataract forward swept,
And met upon the slope the advancing Dane.

Met—but how horrible that crash of death !
How horrible the surge of living forms
Mounting the ruin of the foremost dead !
How fierce rush o'er them Danish king and jarl,
With battle's smile upon their lips, death-wrought
To steel-light, dealing death with axe that brake
The heads before them parted to the chin,
Or whirling blade that hewed an easy path
Through channelled English ranks, as he who sweeps
With staff, and swings them far, the ears of grass.

Would God there were, besides the faces pale
That steadfast press into yon lanes of death,
One face of might ! Would God were even one
Conscious of strength to meet those awful forms,
Death's reapers ! . . . Stroke they crowd on stroke ; each
stroke

Heightens their stature, . . . broadens out their sweep. . . .
Near, . . . nearer, . . . nearer, . . . fiercer, . . . never aught
Like this has man beheld. . . . And O, dear God,
Something is on his limbs that holds them down
Like weights encumbering ! He, his people's king,

Needs seek another arm to smite where his
Should smite. . . . Had ever heart of king before
Such bitter grief?

Then like a flash through cloud
Spasm pierced him through, and chaos mixed the forms
In moving heaps, . . . and then the whole was dark,
A dark of cries confused and dissonant roar.

Then once again he sees the extended lines ;
Before him sees the battles of the past,
All mingled into one, repeat their toil,
Repeat their diapason's anguish. Close
Clamoured on victory's note the desolate cry
Of those whom panic drives before the sword
Of hot pursuers, and the howl of fear
Again is mixed with exultation's shout.

Down rolled the ebbing tides of Northern flow ;
Up rushed the driven streams of English ranks ;
Stood shield-locked mass of English islanded
Whereon the crashing fury of the Dane
Broke vainly ; swept the heathen's mounted charge,
Treading to mangled heap and bubbling blood
The Christians heaped in writhing overthrow.

Twofold the spur on English hopes and fears :
'Victory and deliverance for aye,
Or thralldom and deliverance no more.'

But rose, less varying as it mounted, rose,
The flood of Northman's battle. At the last
Joy-flushed he chased across the escarpment's brow
The English, broken and pale. And then the roar
Of battle changed that it no more was roar,
But as a waking wind, an anguished wail.

And horror, like a hand which in the dark
Grips, seized the king as he beheld the rout,
And on the faces of his staring thanes
He saw despair, a thinning pallor creep.

But undisturbed the chant of mass and prayer
Of white-robed priests and kneeling king kept on,
And intervalled a hush in battle's wail
With notes that, like a fragment of the hymns
Of heaven, stole soft upon the thoughts and spake
Ineffably of hope, of rest, of peace.

He listened, and he saw. But while the notes
Sank in upon his thoughts a wind arose
As if from far, and grew, and swept the wail
Of battle into thunder, which aroused
The forest trees and stormed the startled hills.

It seemed no voice of earth. It seemed to come
From many thousand tongues in heaven's low rim,
All jubilant with immortality :
' Deliverance ! . . . deliverance is come !
Deliverance—for God for Wessex fights !'

Then sudden rapture seized the English ranks,
And changed their yielding into rocky stand ;
And strength as if from storm unseen that floods
The cataract came upon them ; and anew
Broke o'er the brow the cataract of men
And swept upon the Northman's host, and poured
Continuous on until the brow, left bare,
Kept silence. But the slopes were one fierce whirl
Of combat, weltering in an ebb that sank,
Leaving behind its heaped arrays of wrecks,
As ocean's flood its line of stranded weed.
And trickling gore ran down the slopes, as flow
The runlets on the sands in tide's retreat,

Lower and lower down, until the vale
Alone gives forth the battle's waning clang,
Further and further off, until the hosts
Seemed but a mixed dim mass of distant strife,
Which shimmered like a storm-flood seen from far.

At last amid the darkness rose a cry,
A mellowed thunder, sweeping through the vale ;
Innumerable voices in one song
United, one far-spreading peal of praise :—

The heathen is fallen, is fallen ; the land is free,
So perish all Thine enemies, O Lord !'

'O Æthelred, O brother : thus thy prayers
Have won the gift of victory !'

He turned ;
He stretched his arms to greet his brother's form,
But reached them out into the empty dark :
There was no form to greet, no voice replied ;
For kneeling king and priest were there no more ;
Unseen, the dead had joined the unseen dead.

He woke. He could not rise, but closer drew
His cloak around his shivering limbs. His pain
Came freshly on him, and there was that told
His heart that he ere long would meet again,
But as the dead the dead, the brother lost.

* * * * *

Clouds dulled the moon. Auroral gleams arose
And tinged the northern heaven, and lowly moaned
The sleep-forsaken wind. Awhile he watched,
Half conscious what he saw. Then fitful sleep
Anew brought busy picturings of dream.

He saw no armed array, but in the heaven
Were restless flames which wandered to and fro,
Like anguish-forced regrets that could not rest,
And spent vain search for what was theirs no more,
But, seeking for the lost, their strength consumed,
And glided back into the brooding dark ;
And wide heaven seemed to quiver with their pain.

What awful silence that wherein heaven kept
The long-enduring conflict ; never voice

To give a meaning to its throes, nor cry—
The utterance of a momentary pause—
Or vain attempt to ease a keener pang!

Ah, yet more pain, throbbing in cloudy glow
And living flash that canopied the heaven
With vibrant streaks? . . . Nay, 'tis not pain; 'tis
forms. . . .

Forms! . . . Gods of Asgard¹ ride the troubled heaven
In cloudy chariots, tracking it with fire
Of rapid hoof and rolling wheel. . . .

Lead on,

Thou awful shape of sternness, silent, cold,
That scarcely smilest even in mood of joy.
But whither dost thou lead? . . . His cloud-robed brows
Hang hoary o'er the solitary eye,
That flashes keener for the other lost,
Compelling all the secret denizens
Of secret haunts to show them as in light.
About him floats his spangled mantle blue
Like eagle's wings. His golden bracelet gleams
Upon his arm, and in his grasp his spear
Lies gripped as in the hand of one who meets,
After long years, an enemy worthy fight,
In whose encounter hope supreme of fame
Deathless approaches. On his shoulders wide
The weight of mountains easier might rest
Than empty yoke on rustic shoulders strong. . . .

¹ See the notes at the end of the volume.

Lead on, but, Odin, whither dost thou lead?

Lo, floating Valkyries ² before his steed,
His harbingers like mutterings that speak storm !
And near the king of gods, and one half-pace
Of his gigantic stride behind was Thor,
Red-bearded thunderer ; about him clung
His armour, fitting close its wearer's form
And well compacted, knitted in the forge,
But by no smith of mortal woman born ;
But bare it left his arms whose strength were fit
To hammer out upon the wide-rimmed world
Mountain and hollow valley. And he held
His hammer, swaying it as one who sways
Feigning in thought the far approach of foes.

And following after Odin, Freya rode,
Freya his spouse, on whose proud countenance
Were signs of mood unwonted on a face
That had not mortal mould. Thereon they played
Flickering like clouds and pallid light. Approach
It seemed of that which mortal men name care,
Assailing her, that could not keep afar
Such uncondign assaulter of the gods,
But would not deign to note the assailant near.

Beside, of aspect still more terrible
Than even Odin's self, more fierce than Thor,
The awfullest of all the brotherhood,

Was Loki, monster of a face malign.
Upon his lip the smile of evil dwelt ;
The light within his eye was glint that came
As from an inly purposed mood of ill ;—
Bane of the earth and bane of higher heaven,
Why comes he thus as if to Odin's word
Compliant ? Is the monster traitor still
Now that the adder's poison drips no more ⁸
Upon his tortured face, and as a peer
Beside his brethren he, of late their foe,
Has freedom ? When was Loki, Baldur's bane,
To aught but evil true ?

Behind him came
Sigyn the noble, Sigyn, wondrous wife,
Whom Loki scorned, whom Loki trusted not ;
For Loki's love, if it in aught were love,
Was only swaying passion and contempt.
But, faithful to the faithless, scorn for scorn
She gave not, but with patient love endured,
And trustfully endured, whatever woe,
Whatever pain, were his awarded fate,
So she could lighten it in aught for him.

But were there aught that could respond to grief,
To true regret, or aught of noble mood
To exalt with noble pain, then Loki's face
Had shown the writhings of an agony
O'erwhelming even to an immortal god ;

For near him came his victim Baldur, pale,⁴
Pale as from death, and beautiful as pale,
More beautiful than picturing legend told.
No smile was on his face, that once had seemed
Itself the moulding of a smile ; thereon
Was half-lit shadow only. Like a dream
Was he, a reminiscence of a past
Of joy that dwelt upon the past alone.

How different from his neighbour Ocean's god,
Eagir, whose tempest song and stormy roar
Awhile was silent, he in brooding lost,
But riding on as if for him defeat
Were not, nor aught but boundless power to quell
Whatever rose before him. Giant forms
Followed, a fast-assembling multitude,
The Jotun brood and Muspel's progeny,⁵
And with them Surtur⁶ and his brand of flame
Pointing their onward way, and at his side
That night-black wolf, before whose fateful fangs
Even Odin's strength is vain, Fenris,⁷ that came
As Surtur came and Loki, not as wont,
With Asgard's gods, but lived as Asgard's foes.

Silent they tracked the heaven, and heaven no sound
Gave forth. But terrible to view are ranks
Of gods, and yet more terrible when eyes
Whose glance is keenness, such as mortal men

Know not and cannot know, with sudden light
Flash forth their anger of defiance, flash
Contempt upon their enemy newly come
Within their ken.

And from the southern heaven,
Lo, other forms, not such as Asgard's, nursed
'Mid northern winter's ice, by storm-wind trained
To might, but scarce to shapeliest form or grace ;
But, lithe and strong and supple, he beholds
The Olympian gods, array of graceful shapes
Moving in steadfast pride as bent on war.

But more majestic than the mighty dream
Which Pheidias wrought in stone came Zeus in front,
And Ares, roused to ardour ; by his side
Poseidon held his trident and his steeds,
That foamed with wish impetuous, held restrained
In curb as yet ; and near Poseidon rode
Athene, who for ægis had alone
The immortal beauty of her face and mien
Ineffable, and Aphrodite, roused
Not now by passion of desire nor hope,
But passion of an anger at approach
Of foes disdained. Behind thereunto loosed
Came ancient Titans, like to veteran ranks
Nerving the newer gods.

And then arose
A tempest voice, like thunder of the heavens

Ringings through air,—the battle's waking cry,
'Aha! ahoy! ahoy! . . . aha! ahoy!'
A clamour spreading through the speeding ranks
Of Asgard's gods, with but such rhythm as rolls
In thunder's notes. And, answering to the cry,
Like rhythm of ocean striking rocks that fling
Its spray afar, with mellowed crash arose
'Alalè! Alalè!' the answering shout
From lips Olympian. And the ranks closed in.

Then woke the trembling earth, that hitherto
Had seemed in placid sleep, and woke the winds,
And wailed, and woke the lightnings; and the blows
Of Thor rang, flash-begetting, on the helm
Of Ares, who in wrath's indignant heat
Flung blow on blow upon the mighty Thor;
And Thor, regardless of the flashing blade,
Smiled as a man upon the impetuous child
That smites him with its ineffectual blows,
And smote, but gave back blows as if in play.

Then sudden clattered earth and air and heaven
As Sleipnir pranced beneath his smiling lord,
And Odin parried with his spear of might
The lightnings on him rained, like orient storm,
By cloud-compelling Zeus, and in return
Smote rarely, fiercely. Like his lightnings shook
In ineffectual wrath the angry Zeus,

And strove, redoubling blow and speed, to win
Vantage upon his enemy—in vain.

For slower, calmer, fiercelier, as the more
The Olympian's anger rose, did Odin smite ;
So front to front, in never-yielding strife,
Each strove as peers in combat, winning nought.

But while the lords of gods thus equal strove,
Loki the evil-willed, beholding near
Idalian Aphrodite's graceful form,
In charm beyond whatever fairest dream
Of beauty had enthralled him theretofore,
Made purposeful impetuous rush to seize
Such spoil divine, such captive, as his own ;
And Aphrodite saw, and horror came
Where anger frowned but now upon her front,
And traced upon its beauty lines that seemed
Like lines of age upon a maiden's face
Of beauty writ.

But forth Athene strode,
And, with unshaken gaze and stony mien,
Placed her own peerless form before his path
With such complete forbiddal as was hers,
Hers only, even amongst immortal gods,
And sterner than the will of all but fate.

Awhile he turned his evil-boding eye
Upon Athene's form, more beautiful

Than even Aphrodite, beauty's self,
Dream beyond fairest dream of grace and charm
And strength. But as he gazed upon her face,
That held him fascinate with its glorious strength,
A numbness came upon him, on his lips
A pallor. His uplifted arm sank down,
Sank slow at first, then rapid, to his side,
Like some tall tower by earthquake toppled o'er ;
His eyes relaxed their fierceness of desire,
And slowly changed to apathy ; his face
From uncontrolled impetuosity relapsed
Into the stiffness of unliving rock.
And but that Sigyn, faithful as of old,
Faithful in worst extreme, had gripped his arm
And led him back, Sigyn, who had beheld
The shame of his intent and faithless thought,
On Loki then, like swoon on mortal man,
Had come paralysis of limb and power,
With never chance for remedy. Even such
Death's sole effect on an immortal's frame.

But soon so mingled were the ranks in war,
The king no longer saw the single strife
Of god and god, save when some thunderous blow
Drew lightnings, fiercer than the lightnings near,
From panoplied form, or when a weltering calm,
Like that of wounded waves, by cliff dashed back,
Held down before Athene such as came

Too near her fateful eyes, and formed a ground
On whose still space the other conflict showed
Delineate in relief ; save when the brand
Of Surtur on some Titan as he grasped
A cliff-huge mass to fling upon his foes
Fell, and the ineffectual bolt his hand
Loosed like a falling meteor ; and save when
On even the features of Olympian Zeus
A look of horror stole, until that hour
Unseen and hitherto impossible
Upon the faces of immortal gods,
For Fenris leapt with gaping mouth and fangs
Wolf-foul to desecrate his front of power,
And Titans rushed upon the wolf to save
The Olympian king, and strove to tear the beast
Limbmeal, and strangle him, but vainly strove,
And o'er the ranks of gods, that shrank amazed,
The writhing monster and his clutching foes
Together bounded in one wrestling mass.

But with the strife of gods the heaven and air
Were trodden—or trodden seemed—to cloud, as fields
In arid drought are trodden to clouds of dust
By myriad tramp of men. And heaven blazed o'er,
With frequent lightnings braided, and the earth
And clamouring sea felt paroxysmal rolls—
The thunder of the war. Rocks shuddered long,
And forests trembling stood, and every branch

And every leaf was quivering, and the wave
Fluttered. Then, with the thunder louder grown
And fiercer, rose the winds from stagnant fear,
In answer to its clamorous violence,
Into convulsion of affright, and sea
And forest, in bewildered horror, swung
Billow and waving branch like maniacs scared.

But in the intervals of blaze the dark
Grew darker, and together came a cold
Such as no winter knows, nor earthly frost,
And in the thickening dark the angry fire
Of lightnings shrank enfeebled ; yet the storm
Of battle had not stayed nor offered sign
That was not growing fury, growing strength.

And when it seemed that earth could bear no more
The unendurable war, but soon must yield,
Shattered to newer chaos, and the air
No longer bear its quivers, came from far
A light like dawn's first paleness, and it grew
And spread ; and in the dawn a Form appeared
Whose robe was steadfast light. Closer He drew ;
His brow was calm unutterable, His eye
Power, and as One who on tempestuous waves
Trod, easily Master, came He on.

The king

Heard in his thoughts the utterance, ' Peace, be still.'

And, like a dying growl of angry beast,
The thunders sank ; and, like a muffled voice
Of echo, sank the winds ; and, like a flame
Of candle flickering low, the lightnings died ;
And helpless slunk the armies of the gods,
Awestruck before the awful calm of Christ,
And fled, rolled back as gathered clouds are rolled
By winds beyond the horizon stretching far.

Then passed the dream away, and all was blank.
But as it passed the features of the king
Lit up with hallowed smile, and from his lips
'Come even so, O Lord !' the slow words came.

And daylight grew ; but he, in helpless pain,
Lay on the chilly turf. There found, his men
Conveyed him to his capital, and sought
Such healing as they knew. But pain held gripped
His breast, and fever ; and the weary king
Waxed feebler as the autumn days waxed late.

And in those pallid days, when eased from pain,
He uttered thanks for ease, when racked anew,
Endured in patience its constricting bands,
And sometimes even was joyous 'midst the calm
Which reason, relieved from hot delirium, knew,
But often in delirium's wild was lost.
On the sixth day before All Hallows Day,
From pain set free, 'forth fared' the king to God.

THE RIVER

THE waters at their surface smile
In answer to the smiling sun,
And ripple, softly murmuring, while
They move upon their course begun ;
They do but soothe the tender blade
Which scarcely bends before their flow,
But firm the power so gently swayed,
Steady the tone so soft, so low—
The stream is strength below.

The waters at their surface glide
In constant current slow and clear,
So full, so calm, their moving tide,
That hue and form of heaven rest there ;
True-mirrored on their steadfast face
The frailest wisp, the tenderest glow
Which evening's magic can enlase
Or morning's splendour-tints can show—
Their mood is fixed below.

The waters at their surface gleam,
 No rippling smile, no peaceful sweep,
But restless rush and heaving stream
 And broadened breast and billowy leap ;
There is a sound of distant doom,
 Like wafted cries of crowds in woe,
Which, answering its exordium,
 Interprets their prophetic flow—
 The cataract's roar below.

HOPE AFTER LONG DELAY

ADOWN the glade they wandered, and the sun
Poured through the filtering leaves a tremulous light,
That smiled on turf and bracken in pallid smile
And cast the feeble shadows of the twain
Upon the light of that uncertain smile
And wavering shade. With tardy steps they went,
As if by movement slow they would delay
The gait of time, and neither uttered word.
Grief's eloquent silence on their mute lips lay,
Save that the sudden sweeping of a sigh,
Welling from out its desolation depth,
Shook now the man and now the maid. The birds
Sang round, and in that throated song was joy ;
Strange joy it seemed to those whose hearts were sad.

Adown the glade the turfy pathway led
Unto a moss-banked rivulet that tracked,
With eddies slow and creeping pace, the glen,
And offered picturings of the woods to sight,
But only dimly true ; nor more than dim
The truth of even the heaven it showed in smile.

There on the turf a tree but lately felled
Offered a seat, whereon awhile they sat
With silent lips ; but thoughts were clamouring loud
Upon the silence and the tearlessness
Of grief.

At last he took the maiden's hand,
And his mute sorrow spake in deep complaint :

‘ Must it, then, be ? must, then, this parting be ?
This my last clasp of that dear hand I love ?
These my last moments near to hope, and you
And all the rest of life a desert path,
With bitter thoughts to stir its shifting sands
And heap them over skeletoned memories,
Its only landmarks ? Must it, then, be so ?
No word of yours in all that wilderness
To bring a hope, and brace against despair ? ’

A moment she looked up, and answer spake :

‘ A word of hope ? Oh, would that word of hope
Were mine to speak ! And if there were of mine
Word that could shrine itself within your heart,
And help endurance in that desert's wild,
It should be yours ; it would leap forth to you.
But hope ? There is no hope that I may give ;
I must not, dare not, cannot, give you hope !

His pleading glance he turned upon her face :

‘ Oh, yet unspeak,’ he said, ‘ those words again ;
Speak but of lengthened time, speak but of years
That may not have in you their comforter ;
Speak but of years that I must wait alone :
But give a hope even at the end of years.
My heart can make those years a sanctuary,
And kneel in waiting for an end of peace ;
But do not thrust me out among the lost :
I ask no more than this.’

She answered him,
But sorrowful her voice and sad her words :

‘ How willing would I give—’tis that I said ;
’Tis that I say again—if mine to give
Were what you ask, but it were mocking pain,
It were embittering bitterness of grief,
Were I to speak a word so false as hope.
If it were love’s, and love’s alone, to give,
Hope had been yours at your heart’s first appeal ;
’Tis love’s, and love’s alone, to hold it back.’

Then opened his lips to half-reproachful words :

‘ Is love its own forbiddal ? Does it force
Unloving immolation of its tongue,
That it may hold the heart for ever dumb,
And not dictate instead the shattering

Of every other fetter but its own?
I ask but hope with duty's sanction given,
Though it withhold until the end of years;
If love forsook this hope, could it be love?'

Her eyes turned full upon his weary face,
And met the earnest sorrow which his eye
Shot forth, a beacon glance like light in storm
That gives not aid, but only shows the storm,
And made reply:

‘Could it be love, you ask,
Which is its own forbiddal? Is it love
That quenches hope? If every pulse of mine
Were words and spake, its words would be of love—
It tells unto my heart my love of you—
And 'tis enough in grief if I can feign
My hand in yours, and if my thoughts can hear
Your voice. When there was aught you praised of mine
That praise has given a shiver of delight;
The thoughts of every day fill up with you,
And nought I do but find, in doing, thought
Is watching silent what my deed would be
In your regard. And night and dream complete
The thoughts of day creating semblance new
Of you—your look, your smile, your words, your ways.
Think you this is not love? Then what is love
If this be other? I am part of you;

My thoughts, my heart, my soul, my day, my night—
They are become not me, not mine, but you.’

There is a moment when the setting sun
Floods, underneath a clouded canopy,
The misty veil of falling shower, and lights
With yellow glow, which seems increasing glow,
The green of landscape waking as to joy ;
But in the effort is not dawn nor hope,
And in the increasing sadness of the eve
It fades away. Such smile, that was not hope’s,
From out her lover’s eye and all his face
Looked forth, and hearing her impassioned words,
He slowly raised his head and sat erect.

‘You love me ! oh, I know, yet know it not !
How can I take the meaning of your words ?
Your heart consents to love ; your will withholds
Its own consent and manacles your heart—
How can I solve enigma such as this ?
Against this cold refusal of your will
My heart has bitter whispers which I keep
Enchained. I blame you not for sign that gave
A welcome unto love—it is too sweet
To know myself beloved—you own me yours ;
You yet refuse me mine—yourself ! Your will
The only barrier unto sweet consent ?
I would not utter words that offer pain,
But, oh, withhold not pardon from my thought ;

What other can refusal seem to me
Than hard, . . . unkind? . . . I had said cruel, too,
Save that the very love within me tells
How such reproach speaks bitterly to love,
And yours were words that only could be love's—
I would not pain that love—but is it just
To have given so much and yet deny the whole?
And is it true to your own heart and me?’

And, bending down his face, he raised her hands
And held them, and within them hid his face—
How sweet to have them even a moment close—
And then with reverent kiss he placed them back,
And held them clasped upon her knee and looked,
With eyelids anguish-dry, upon the stream.

A stillness, but the stillness of a force
That holds, yet scarcely holds, strong shiver back,
Kept on the maid its rigid grasp. And then
Broke sobs long intervalled through repression's fence,
And, at the last, slow words and sad came forth :

‘I cannot ; oh, I cannot ! I could die
With willingness, if, bought by death of mine,
There could be joy for you. I love you—love,
Love unto very misery of love—
And hate myself, that cannot help such love
And gave confession's sign. Oh, woe is me

That dare not think the thought of being yours,
Me whom releaseless maidenhood demands !
Nay, do not ask me why—I must not say—
'Tis pain, but 'tis necessity that keeps
My tongue in silence ; it was pain that spoke—
Pain's hard necessity—my words of love.
I love you, but I dare not do you wrong ;
I cannot give you, must not give you, hope.'

'Enigma and enigma more and more,'
He said ; 'but if you cannot give me hope
As any certain light, forbid me not
The thought of possibility to come
When hope may yet approach, may yet be mine.'

'And would you bid me throw,' the maid replied,
'O'er all your life the shadow thrown on mine,
And bid you doom the manliest of your years
To lonely waiting for a withered hope ?
To court refusal of some love that yet
Might build about your heart a home and joy ?
No,—love of mine shall never work such wrong.
Forget my love, forget it, save in this :
That, if your heart shall meet its wifely mate,
What you have been to me she too shall be ;
In her for you, to you in her, my love
Be given. To maiden life my duty calls ;
I must fulfil that duty to the end.'

‘But I,’ he said, ‘unto no other heart
Can give the love which fills my heart for you :
Take back—for it is pain—take back the thought.
I love but you ; my heart is yours alone ;
I seek no home but you, that are my home.’

And then she rose.

‘It cannot, must not, be ;
Let us be strong to thrust this anguish back.
I bless you, and I bless you ; and I love ;
With blessing let this parting soothe its pain.’

Down from the trunk upon his bended knee
He sank, and held awhile the maiden’s hand,
And pressed it to his lips. Upon it fell
Suddenest drops of anguish, for his eyes
Withheld them not, nor had thereunto strength.

Then from his knees arising—for the man,
Responsive to her call, within him rose
And checked the tears—in sad, in reverent clasp
He held her. And a moment, as he clung,
She let her lips, that with unuttered sobs
Were pale, touch his ; then gently loosed his clasp
And turned away and left.

He stood to watch
Until the woods concealed her. But a song
Near him awoke, a full, a luscious song,

The nightingale's, that meets the coming dark
With such a joy as fills it full with hope.

And one sweet gleam made glory of the trees
Where parted hills gave opening for the flood
Streaming in fulness from the level sun.

He saw, and took the omen ; and the years
Gave it fulfilment. Duty's seeming claim
For sacrifice was duty's claim no more,
And love fulfilled itself in hope fulfilled.

RECOVERY

HE wandered musing for a while
Amid the calm of tranquil day ;
The sunlight like a happy smile
On all the scenery lay.

A calm as if from joy afar
Upon his weary spirit stole ;
Joy comes not close when griefs debar
Hope's ingress from the soul.

'Content I view the happy light ;
Content I breathe the tranquil air ;
Content I mark what colours bright
The flowers unfolding wear.

'A voice that hath not note nor tone
Seems speaking silent to my heart :
"The peace they hold—be that thine own
Till thou from these depart."

'I listen to the voice and take
As almost hope's the message sent ;
New vague desires within me wake,
Sensation new is lent.

‘I feel it in the sunny gleam ;
I hear it in the air’s repose :
Ere long this sad, this troubled dream
Of life for me will close.

‘I learn, nor seem to know regret,
Learning that soon the dream may cease ;
The troubled past I would forget
In one long sleep of peace.’

* * * * *

Once more he wandered for a while ;
It was not calm of tranquil day :
No sunlight like a happy smile
Upon the scenery lay.

A calm, yet not of joy afar
And dim, upon his spirit stole ;
No longer now did griefs debar
Hope’s ingress from the soul.

‘Content I see the stormy light ;
Content I breathe the stormy air ;
Content renew awhile the fight
With trouble, doubt, and care.

‘A voice that hath not note nor tone
Speaks silent to my listening heart :
“The storm is faith’s whence faith alone
Can cause new peace to start.”

‘ I learn, nor seem to know regret,
Learning the struggle is not o’er ;
The troubled past I would forget
In one strong effort more.’

ALL THINGS PASS AWAY

I.

THE roar of autumn wind among the trees !
They bent bewildered, and their fluttering leaves
Cried out and did not cease their long complaint ;
And still the persecuting blast kept on
And tore away the leaves, and strewed the glades
With broken branch and twig in flying fall.
Amidst the general clamour swaying trunks
Creaked, hardly heard, and swayed their last and fell ;
And over all the slopes that once in eld
Were forest depths about the river's banks,
Wrought after unto park, was wreck of branch
Or tree at eve ; nor when the daylight died
Died down the storm, but in the night anew
Swept the long hills with thunder, spreading far.

An oak before the castle's front there was,
Not near, but thrice an arrow's flight away ;
Age-weary on supports the ancient tree
Leaned, bent above the gaping wound of age
That reached to half its girth, and arched itself
Above, and showed below a hollow shell
Of circuit huge ; and from its floor arose

A birthling of its age that stood erect,
And took the place and air the parent left,
And raised its spreading arms above, and clasped
With its young roots, as seeking for support,
The mould that once had been its parent's roots.

The morning showed the two a tangled wreck,
The youngling lying prostrate in the embrace
Which broken mother on uprooted child
Threw, as a shelter o'er it, when she fell.
Thus they lay low that more to him had been
Who owned the castle as his heritage
Than all his other heritage of woods,
The mother planted by his far-off sire
Who built the ancient castle's massive walls,
The earliest of his line—he planted it,
So legend to the future years had told,
Where erst had stood the oak whose branching shade
Gave shelter to the wondering throng when first
Was there proclaimed the wondrous tale of Christ;
The youngling from an acorn of the old
Reared, and there planted to commemorate
The birth of him whose eyes beheld that morn
The broken mother and uprooted child.

Full many a change that haughty race had known,
Full wide the havoc in the old domain
Through border war, through changing dynasty,
Wrought, that from ancient heritage had torn

More than the total left, yet left withal
A wealth of power which even so was great ;
And through the long, the changeful, history
That tree had stood, and legend linked therewith
The hope and destiny of his ancient house.

Regretful on the wreck, and long, he gazed,
Then neared as if his eyes desired to give
Assurance of his sorrow to his heart,
And with him went his son, his only child—
Man of full years, in whom the pride of race
Had sunk debased to pride of stubborn will,
And yet in whom that father's love and hope
Saw all the future honours of his line.

A moon or two—it was no more—that son
Lay stricken by the hand of coming death,
And, in the weary hour when death was close,
From his faint lips, that scarcely moving spake,
His parents heard a tale which first they deemed
The feeble chatter of a dying dream :
Concealed espousals, and the maid espoused
Not even the equal of a yeoman's wife.
But in the appeal whose scarcely uttered words
Death choked, which asked for pity on the child
The espousal's fatal fruit, they knew as truth
The pain whose hard necessity they strove,
Through duty's bitter claims fulfilled, to change
From pain to hope, from evil unto good.

II.

Her face, that infant's mother's face, wore marks
Of will unchecked upon its paleness stamped ;
But shapely was the face, for shapely brows
And front, though that was low, stretched over width
Of shapely cheek ; from out their hazel's dark
Her eyes, which glanced and dulled with changeful mood,
Shot vivid fire ; her nose of outline straight
Rose o'er thin lips, and straight, broad chin and neck,
White and not long, but firm, and shoulders broad ;
Her mien, if grace had but been there, had seemed
Even stately. Such she was, fit nurse to cause,
Fit nurse to nurture, in the child she bore
A wilfulness that even could mate her own.

' *She* give her child to wealth-proud hearts to keep,
That she herself, in that child's womanhood,
Should be a stool to prop her foot of pride ?
She ? Gold, nor power, nor pride could force the deed ;
Her child she was, and she would keep her child !'

So unto all suggestion, all attempt,
To give the child what lineage claimed, and right—
The training due—her will was placed as bar ;
And broken and hopeless, brooding over hope
Broken, the mistress of the castle sank,
And dying, left her lord the heavy care,
Whose heaviness had weighed her down to death.

Amidst a desolation once so long
A home, he lived, he wandered, old, yet old
In sorrow more than years, his bearing still
Erect, but seldom voice was on his lips,
And in his eye a fixed regard had come,
The wounded eagle's stare on that which wounds.

But when at age of fifteen years the child,
His son's, was brought to him a motherless girl,
Uncultured, rude, self-willed, an aim seemed given,
Though difficult, to age and grief and life ;
His old heart clung to even that rugged stock,
The sole remains of all of nearer kin,
And poured thereon its whole devotion's strength.

He spared not aught, whatever might avail
To train in that rude heart a nobler will,
To give to that rude mind a lettered taste ;
But fitful mood and passion of self-will
Well-nigh at times made effort seem but vain.

Yet, when her mood was mild, so near she seemed
To what endears in girlhood's sweetest charm
That, in the end, the fond devotedness
Of age held fetters o'er the old man's will ;
Yielding too oft seemed peace, and struggle pain.

But his the upright heart which in the hearts
Of others read integrity till proof

Compelled belief, which, then reluctant, late,
Entered his thoughts and slank ere long away.

And ah ! to eyes of love no fault is fault ;
There were whose minds with dark forebodings filled,
And breathed no word to him nor spake of doubt :
Of what avail to speak to trust so strong
Words that would wound, but not receive belief ?

But aged lips amongst the tenantry
Muttered their wonder at the change of times,
And missed the ancient bearing and reserve
Which brought a kindness not less true, but more
Than that which, with a levity ill-timed
It seemed to them, its open laughter mixed,
And with what laugh regardless.

‘Times are changed’ ;

Unto their unpersuaded mutterings
The younger answer came, ‘And folk are changed.
The stiffness of the ancient days is gone ;
Who in these better times would call it back ?’

III.

Sorrow and silence in that ancient hall ?
One seat was by the board, and he who sate
Regarded not what dish before him lay,
Nor noticed when the dish untouched was changed,

Nor answered save with moving lips that gave
Response of movement, not of sound, to words
Wherewith the hoary butler's quivering voice,
Subdued and husky, sought to apprehend
His meaning ; and the aged leaning head
Sought rest upon a shaking hand that, raised
By elbow on the table, had from that
To which it gave its own support an aid.
And when the dumb parade of food was o'er,
And the retreating footsteps of the men
Kept silence, treading softly as they left,
He sat, nor knew he sat, the wine untouched,
Unpoured, the fruit untouched and unbeheld
Before him. For before his eyes he saw
The darling of his age in vision float,
And memory brought its earliest impress back ;
And then her father's face, his son's, as child,
And likeness to his son, before unseen,
Came clear, and intonation of her voice
Came back as his, and ways that seemed before
Of no similitude. Then thought crept back
To days when love was young and love was joy,
And once again he felt the clasping hand
Of his son's mother, heard her love-glad voice.

Oh for a clasp once more of that dead hand,
One word of living love from those dead lips,
One look of love from those death-hidden eyes !—

Still further in the past, and he was boy,
And at that board, beside his father placed,
Was sitting, and his mother's happy gaze
And stately mien were there, as long ago. . . .

Then bitter struggle came ; and pride with grief
Strove, grief with love—pride with expunging touch
On later memories and on later years,
Love that repainted all, and grief that changed
Love's tints to hues of sadness. Still he sate,
Nor grief, nor pride, nor love remained supreme,
And dull exhaustion paled his weary thought.

A noiseless opening of the door let in
The old companion of his aged steps,
His mastiff. Gazing at the moveless form,
The dog a minute stood, and then paced slow,
His head low hung, across the floor, and went
In silence near, and in mute sorrow placed
Softly his head against his master's knee.

Thereby aroused from reverie, he woke,
And placed a hand upon the mastiff's head,
And lowly came, responsive to the touch,
The creature's whine that nestled closer still.

But as the old man stirring moved his eyes,
Without intent he met the moveless gaze
Of one who faced him, pictured on the wall,

An ancestor of generations back,
That stared upon his face his changeless stare,
And seemed about to speak some lifeless word.
He looked aside ; another ancestor
Stared his hard stare, and seemed as if in act
To speak. And one by one the pictured line
Met thus his eyes, and seemed on words intent,
But all the words were voices of the dumb,
Till fronting was his father's gentler gaze.

Remembrance brought to those dead lips their voice,
That spake in utterance, low and sad, 'The last,'
And then, as if with loosened voice, the lips
Of all the row of faces seemed to speak,
'The last.'

He rose, he turned, he staggered forth
Towards the hearth, the mastiff by his side ;
The fire lit up the armorial shield behind :
'The last,' it seemed to say. The mantel-stone,
The panelled wall, the carved recess, 'The last'
Repeated each in turn. And even the chair,
Relic of long ago, in which he sank,
In carved device received his feeble weight,
Repeating to his heart that thought, 'The last.'

He hid his face ; he could not hide his thoughts :
The dog, still offering his dumb comfort, pressed
Closer his knee.

He stretched his hand to touch ;
The hand fell strengthless on the mastiff's head :
One side was lost to use, and thought was numbed,
And silence lay upon his speechless tongue.

For all his aged hope in her had died
Who far from home had died. And whispered words
And rumour spake the cause, and told a tale
Of thoughtless yielding to betrayal's kiss.

THE KNIGHT'S VIGIL

‘Er het uf hohe minne sine sinne gewant.’

Das Nibelungenlied.

I SAW a vision when the sun was low,
And eve was trembling down to dark of night,
Misty as moonbeams on the distant snow,
A spectral form of pale, of tenuous glow,
That came upon the path, a shadowy light,
And silent led me onwards to the shrine
Whereat my heart might pour obeisant prayer ;
The image in that shrine enthroned was thine,
And Hope the guide who led my footsteps there.
Hardly my heart consented to entreat
As faint before a thought too glad, too sweet.

Did I but dare my longings unto thee
To lift, or such acceptance even deem
As truth that thou wouldst condescend to me,
And that thy loving troth could ever be
On me as mine in aught bestowed but dream,
Then would my soul in ecstasy's surprise
Uplift itself to deed, to aim, to thought,

To effort, as some mountain chain might rise
With great emotions crowded, yet so wrought
By might to calm, it needs no earthquake shock
To raise to heaven itself its brow of rock.

With such a bliss upraised, how great were life !
Roused to that calm sublime of strength and power
Above the incessant movements and the strife
Of manifold emotions that, too rife,
Channel and tear and flood the downcast hour ;
Great in its noons of light and even as great
In its resplendent calms of eve and morn ;
Emotion's very blushes burn in state
As crowning glory, not as thrust of torn,
Of molten, feeling, in that lifted sphere
Where the soul feels its aim, its heaven, is near.

The thought that thou couldst love me even in dream
Gives sweetness to the messaged winds ; they take
Unto the sleeping leaves the joy supreme,
Which, then aroused unto the quivering theme,
A murmured song of gratulation make.
But were it more than dream, what happy song
Of mystic sweetness on the winds were rolled !
The darkest night with dawn's soft thrills would throng,
And morn, aglow with more than morning's gold,
Change dreamy gladness to prophetic ray,
Dawn's wondering joy to great inspiring day.

And in the night stood Hope beside me, pale,
And lit my vigil with her glimmer low,
And once amid the darkness, wrapped in veil
Of tissued throbbing light, she changed to glow
That smote my spirit unto overthrow
And swoon. But, when I woke, the steely dawn
With apathetic blank her eyes had stilled ;
From off the shrine its rich suggestions torn,
To marble's cold its figured saint had chilled.
Oh, cruel clearness not to gild, but bare !
Oh, cruel light to quench a dream so fair !

Oh, cruel frost of dawn whose shiver ran
Through all my soul and rendered Fancy numb,
That, thus dejected, held no talisman
Wherewith to rouse to life, to hope, to plan,
Her aspirations, fallen before her dumb !
I hid my face in grief, nor did I know
The silent bonding of the knightly spur
And girded belt. The sun arose. And lo
Before mine opened eyes investiture !
My heart with throbbing vigour leapt, and flow
And flood around me rolled of morning's glow.

I rose. Whate'er the burden of the day,
A trust on me I knew to keep bestowed,
A trust for thee ! A quest was given, and way

To follow, and for thee ! O'er doubts that lay
Encumbering, my thoughts triumphant strode.
Be it my fate to be beloved by thee,
Or unbeloved of thee in vain to love,
The symbol of that trust I ever see
As flaming cross and circling flame above
The wild, the stream, the forest, and the height,
A living dream by day, a glow by night.

Symbol of love by struggle broken down ?
Of strife that love against itself must force ?
Of woe inwoven in the victor's crown ?
Of joy that shall a past of sorrow drown ?
Of honour wreathed around the victor's corse ?
Nay, but the wearing of the sign of woe
In beams prophetic of triumphal wreath
Which he who in continual overthrow
Has trodden ignoble thoughts, and base, beneath
His feet shall wear ; the drops his wounds have shed
Made gems to grace the crown that wreathes his head.

Symbol of love that bled to death in pain,
But dying, dealt to wrong its mortal blow ;
Symbol of self-renunciation's gain,
The sacrifice it seeks, nor seeks in vain,
In wound received to save another's throe ;
Of worship given with all devotion's strength ;

Of honour stainless kept and feeling pure ;
Of steadfastness that through the weary length
Of life abides ; of faith that stands secure ;
And yet of grief, that with the dark of night
Enwraps the soul it leads to endless light.

‘WHAT DOEST THOU HERE?’

‘STAND up upon thy feet, O broken of heart !
Thine eyes were not for that dull, drooping gaze ;
Thy thoughts were not for imagery bowed
Like bended rush before the tempest’s roar ;
Thy heart was not for sending hopeless blood
In slow, pale current through diminished veins ;
The vision of the mighty and the far,
And glory realmed where mediocrity
And multitude behold it not, and strength
Of solitary greatness, grief, endowed
With pity’s power, not weakness of despair—
These were for thee ! Rise from thy couch of rock,
And stand upon the mount before thy God.’

Like drops that in a cavern’s darkness drip,
Clear, slow, mysterious, came within his soul
This bidding from a monitor unseen,
These words—or seemed to come. His massive brow,
That thitherto in apathetic calm
Leaned low, he raised as searching whence it came.

From heaven’s wide region evening’s glow sent in
A straying wave of light, which of the gloom

Fashioned a shore in that cave's mystery ;
The entering light he saw, and turning, looked,
And, through the entrance, he beheld in heaven
A fragment of illumined cloud, from whence
A tinted glimmer reached his weary face,
Like light from votive lamp in vaulted tomb
Shed on the face of one whose work is o'er.

Slowly he lifted up his stalwart form,
And left with stately steps the dark, and stood
Before the entrance. Down below, afar,
In calm emotion of farewell the plain
Was blush-suffused unto its distant verge ;
Above him, like the leap of mighty thrill,
A mountain summit rose to flash heaven-high
Unto the parting sun its great adieus,
And reaching up into the western skies
Empurpled peaks, with their empurpled black,
Hid from his view the sun. What clouds in heaven
Hovered were tenuous glow and wisp of flame,
That seemed as of a sacrifice unseen
And rite unheard. Silent was dying day,
Silent the mighty plain, silent the heights,
Silent the listening wind. One voice alone
Crept through the stillness : water's murmurous note,
The torrent's distance-crumbled thunder low.

Its voice was like a murmur from a past
Breathed on his heart's dull silence, speaking thus :

'Not this dull mood of labour-lorn despair,
Not this, but great emotions were for thee,
Emotions strong with consequence of toil.'

And then, as if its silence were a sound,
Seemed thus the glowing mountain height to speak :
'Not this defeated mood and wounded will,
But lifted thought, the nurse of deed sublime—
Such is for thee.' And then 'Not this' the spell
Of valley rose-hued, while its deepening hue
Retreated into darkness, effort-full
Even unto its last moments of retreat,
Added, 'but toil till life's last light is gone.'

To the same purport steadfast rock and cliff,
Cold in their steely gleam when fiery glow
Of sunset left them, as in voice of steel,
Suggested 'not the waste of wrecked intent,
Not hours whose numbing grief is prostrate, dull,
But hours to which by deeds the gift is given
Of 'immortality.' And memoried flush
Of afterglow and even the lifeless stand
And sculptured stony death of mountain heights
When eve's last glimmering thoughts had left them cold,
With silent message of like meaning fraught,
Followed. He listened to his past, to know
What note amidst its sequence touched by hope,
If any, gave response of living tone.

Then night's unnumbered stars, pale, distant, cold,
The remnants of illuminating thrills
Which age and distance wrought to low and dim,
Entered from spangled heavens his watching soul.

But with the night came cold of mundane dew ;
And plain and height sank into featureless shade,
Nor had as yet a rising moon of hope.
He shivered as he stood. And groping back,
He sought once more his rocky cavern couch,
And lay in weariness of calm despair.

Ah, once for him the thrill of lifted hope
Had, like that glowing summit, glowed in heaven ;
And once for him life's landscape spread itself
In tinted beauty ; and his thoughts were lit
With heaven's great light of inspiration's joy.

But on the brief illumined hour had come
A dark whose loveless blotting out of scene
Left only glints of satisfaction, shed
From distant heaven on duty done, a night
Whose cold sank icy on his wearied soul
In men's rejection of the message given,
And blindness of the minds he sought to aid ;
Blindness that saw not as the prophet saw.

Then slow repeating movements of dull dream,
Not sleep's, but waking dream, beat on his brain,

And bound his thoughts through night's lone length
of dark ;
But scarce he stirred, nor aught of sound save sigh,
And sigh long intervalled, his lips gave up,
Nor did he know when early dawn came on,
The summer's dawn of wakeful vigilance,
But dull and grey. No splendour hues had Morn ;
Her front was cheerless, weighted low with cloud ;
And notes of rising wail spoke slow and sad,
Then ebbed away to stillness, then arose
And ebbed once more away, and so kept on
Through morn's first hours and past the hidden noon,
Then leapt from wail to roar and thunderous sweep ;
And on the cavern's aperture as reed
Blew Titan notes of one unchanging strain,
The prelude of destruction's opera.

In that long roar was utterance of command ;
Not in its loudness did he hear its words,
But as a note hid low amid the roar :
At first it sank upon his broken heart
As waters on the thirst of dry morass
That first seems heedless of the rain, and next
Has swallowed all, nor offers sign of change,
But lastly shows reception visible.
So did the long-repeated bidding wake
His thoughts, and once again his couch he left,
And turned towards the cavern's mouth his steps,

And stood and leaned against the rocky wall,
But could not—for the wind forbade it—stand
Beside the entrance.

Where he stood, he saw
Swift-speeding clouds in rent ranks hurrying past,
That opened vistas towards the distant heights,
Or dim, dark, blue, towards the plain far down,
But no exalted gap towards peaceful heaven
Allowed, nor even part-hidden glance of sun
And cheering light. Above him, as below,
Darkness and sweeping storm. And soon the wind
Grew wild and swept, with voice of awful note
And loud lament, the shuddering mountain steeps ;
And, forced into the cave, the driven air,
As if in fetters, held him to the rock.

Then, as though Earth had listened all too long
To such complaint of storm as vexed her peace
And stirred her unto wrath, a-sudden came
Quiver and crash whose voice out-thundered storm ;
Tall rocks in shuddering loosed their clinging hold
Upon their mountain stay, and quivering, fell,
And left, above, an unsupported field
Of heights, which all at once with quivers shook
And fell in momentary flood of fear,
And drave the tortured winds before its rush
On frightened forests, which, with one short cry,
Before the ineffable blast sank, mangled, flat.

And then the earth's emotion for a space
Of some few moments ceased. Then burst through
cloud

And sultry air, and leapt from mountain mass
To mountain mass wild, twisted, knotted, long,
Lightnings that in exuberant fantasy
Wandered about their sides like creeping plants ;
And thunders spake and echoed, and again
Spake answers to their echoes. And once more
Earth shook as if in spasm, and toppled crags
Even mightier on the ruin of her wrath.

And storm dured on, until the setting sun,
Through curtained gaps, illumed its trailing skirts
Of cloud and lace of lightnings ; while, above,
It hung its heavy shroud, slow-moving, dark.

And then through one clear caverned gap, that pierced
The shroud, the vistaed heaven's tranquillity
Was shown, and lightnings ceased, and shadowy gloom
Veiled all the lower cloud and lower scene ;
But through the widening gap above the cloud,
That sundered its majestic quietude
From all below, one mountain-top appeared
High up in heaven, with sweet ethereal glow
Transcendent lit—a glow too fair, too calm
For earthly passion of consuming fire.

He went without the entrance, and beheld
Above a sea of cloud the dying storm
And wonder-radiant glow of passing day.

But as he stood, and silence even seemed
More than itself in stillness, came from far
A voice as if descending through the calm
And glory, from the eternal peace of heaven,
And spake, yet not with sound to outward ear,
But soundless voice unto his listening soul,
In stillness equalled only by the voice
Of conscience 'mid the lone and silent night.

'What doest thou here?'

A moment with his hand

He sought support against the rock, and then
He leaned his weight thereon ; and o'er his face
He placed his bony fingers. Suddenly,
Amidst the arid desert of despair
And shrivelled thought, emotion welled once more ;
Tears few, but vehement, from his closed eyes came
Bubbling and trickling through the screen that hid
His face. Then, like a form of stone, he stood
Till dark held all, and, like a shadow, then
Amidst the dark into the cave returned,
And sank in silence into sorrow's sleep.

The broken fragments of the answer due
To that still question were as scudding clouds

Carried through thought, while fell his hidden tears,
But incoherent, and the gasped response
Of one who pants in pain, nor had it reached
To utterance breathed, but was unuttered grief.

And long he slept not. But the waking hour
Brought voiced coherences; and answer came,
A storm of flowing anguish from his lips.
What did he there? Dead hopes of fruitless years
Stared mute into his face their dying woe.
To what result, to what result, was all?
To what result had been the earnest words
Which fell on dulness like unmeaning talk?
To what result devotion's efforts spent
On lessening suffering's all too heavy load?
To what result reiterated toil
To form in stubborn hearts a precinct's space
Where holy aspiration, saintly thought,
And noble purpose, made divinely strong,
Might have an unprofaned security,
And hallow all the lower haunts that fill
Those crowded hearts?

Who even had stayed to hear
The words of spoken truth received them not!
The seed was seed which fell on parching soil
In arid minds that were as desert sand.

No word, no utterance, of appeal aroused
Even late remorse in hearts wherein the throne

Was covetise ; and on the throne as god
The Baal of the sensual self sat throned,
Whose regnant priest mowed all prophetic hints
Of conscience down, and slaughtered all whose lips
Gave utterance unto claims of right and truth.

And yet for one brief hour, though brief yet great,
Unto their barren hearts and arid lives
He had from heaven drawn down ennobling fire,
The fire of God, and had response to faith
In heaven's emotion of recruiting storm.

But sequent unto that was hate renewed,
And murderous will and profanation roused
The more, and more to fierceness panoplied.

Of what avail his toil? of what avail
His thoughts, his life, beyond the fruitless lives
Of those who had not striven for right, but lived
Content amidst the evil till they reached,
Without a grief, the end of thoughtless life?
Better that useless toil should end, and lips
That vainly spake cease utterance. Better sleep
In that deep sleep which has no anguished dream
Of shattered hope, no waking agony
Of broken heart that failed, and could not give
Interpretation of itself, nor move
Those who, except to foolish, selfish, low,
Offered no greeting, gave no welcoming smile.

But what if this were unto him assigned
As destiny of life? What if his God
Had given him life, power, thought for this—to fail?

Was there then need of failure further yet?
Was there not in his devastated past
Enough of failure and enough of grief
To satisfy such destiny of pain?

'Twas thus he laid him down, that far away
From all inhuman stare, and all alone
In grief, on that high mount he might attain
His last, his one remaining longing—sleep;
His last, his dreamless, everlasting sleep.
Here 'mid memorials of the mighty throes
Through which the labouring earth her mountain-chains
Fashioned to quell decay by lasting strength:
So wearied failure like a dreamless child
Might sleep 'mid signs of throned accomplishment.

Then came, so calm, so still, that echo slept
And caught no note, a bidding, but so clear,
He knew the monitor and voice which spake
Unwavering in demand, yet strong in love.

'Success or failure, what is that to thee?
Obey thou Me!'

And then the impulse came
To go once more into the outer light;
Impulse which in the darkness seemed command.

And, hued with morning light and shadow blue,
Beneath unclouded skies the pictured scene
Lay as in rest before him ; yet was thronged
With ceaseless silent energies that wrought
Unto fulfilment each its destined part.

Were these to falter if the end was far ?

Nay, what to these if the tremendous aim
Of destiny was not final end or goal
But everlasting sequence ? Unto each
Were sphere and purpose planned, allotted, scribed,
Its duty its accomplishment assigned,
Its fitting place amid the mighty whole.

‘ And even as these, so thou fulfil thy lot.’
Thus spake again the monitor unseen.
‘ To one more mission, and thy last, return,
Content as these, and discontent alone
To fail in duty, whether victory gained
Or loss endured be sequel, or even lot
More hard than loss. Unto thy task return,
And to their full-achieving power exert
Thine inborn gifts, by one imperial aim
Led on. Whatever most exalted seems
And noblest, what to inspiration’s call
Vibrates as truest. And fulfil therewith
Thy work. There is a destiny designed
Mightier than seems, for all the toils of all ;

Nor is the struggle meaningless nor vain,
Which all the weary centuries racks the world,
Nor deem thou that the triumph-stains of sin,
The tattered flag of right, the panting breath
Of wounded truth, nor oft-repeated cry
Of misery that ever echoless spreads,
And answerless, as lost in infinite heaven,
Prefigure victory or predict the end
As destined for the side whose strength is sin.
For truth were less than truth, and right than right,
That were not equal to heroic deed
And long endeavour and the sufferer's pain ;
And how were these apart from struggle theirs ?
Or tested by what test save conflict waged
With never word of hope to lead them on ?
Obey thou Me !'

A darkness passed before,
And centuries rolled like moving clouds, and brought
Fragments of their dim struggles seen afar.

But whether from the centuries past it came,
Or whether from the centuries yet to be,
He knew not. . . . 'Twas the vision of a cross
Whereon One hung in desolate anguish pale,
A love that seemed forsaken of love, and truth
That seemed as bound and bleeding unto death.

Startled he gazed, but while he gazed 'twas gone.

Yet left its mystic meaning written clear
Upon his thoughts : the truth that will prevail
Must conquer thus the very throes of death ;
The love that will redeem, through riven heart
And utter desolation reach its aim.

PARTING

AND thou art gone, my dearest,
And I remain—alone.
Ever must thou be nearest,
Though ever gone.

The thoughts thy great soul utters
With ease of lip divine
In accents feebler stutters
This life of mine.

Must this one taste, this only
Of love's inspiring bliss
Be all, and always lonely
I have but this ?

Then let the hour which never
Its pathway may retrack,
While it moves on for ever
Send memories back.

BLENDING VOICES

Is it voice of the years that are gone,
Or voice of the days to be,
On the shore of the present thrown,
Like waves of the summer sea?

It is not a blissful sound,
It is not a tone of woe,
But an utterance full, profound,
And strong, not loud nor low.

But the notes of its rise and ebb
Weave one continuous stream,
That is like the remembered web
Of song in a mystic dream.

O voice of the years that are gone,
Or voice of the days to be,
What doth it speak, that tone
That sounds like the summer sea?

‘Mind not the day nor the night,
Mind not the eve nor the morn,
Mind not the cloudless light,
Nor the noons of sun forlorn.

'Thy heart to its purpose keep,
And steadfast toil to the last,
*A tide cometh full from the deep,
Fulfilling the tides of the past.'*

'Tis voice of the years that are gone,
And voice of the days to be,
That mingle them thus in one,
Into sound of the summer sea.

“THE DAYS OF THY MOURNING
SHALL BE ENDED”

I

LOVE had its hour of sweet acceptance given,
An hour of happy hopes, of hallowed bliss ;
Then destiny forbade fulfilment's joy.

For in the very noon of hope the maid,
With strange impairment sickened, and disease
Trode out to days the slow mysterious hours,
And days to lingering months and months to years ;
And Hope beheld the long path lengthening
Further and further into slow decay ;
And ever as she watched she grew more wan,
Until in spectral paleness she dissolved
And passed to naught. But ever more and more,
In the calm sadness of the weary years
And dwindling strength, the maiden saintlier grew,
And ever grew in him whose love was hers
The love, and was a love that breathed in pain ;
But ere two decades passed the maiden's grave
Had given to peace of patience peace of rest.

And life thenceforward was to him a past
Filling the present with the memoried tide
And voice of its retentive waves. But words
Were spoken by lips rebuking him, that bade
Fashion his thoughts unto a present hour,
That filled not with the voices of the past.

'Why linger thus to listen to the past?
Dost thou expect return, or think to seek
Some short return of happiness the years
Stole as an envied boon and left thee bare?
The hope is vain; and in an echoed voice
What help, when that it echoes is afar,
And has no love, no living presence near?'

'Return, O friend? And didst thou say return?
I seek it not, it were but vain to seek.
The years from which return could be besought
Of those past hallowed joys, themselves, effaced
Like their dead violets, are as humid mould,
They could not listen if they would, nor give;
They could not, if they would, weave o'er again
The faded tissues of that sacred dream,
Its love-bright hues, its flower-depicted joys,
Its shadowed sadness sacred as its joys.
They could not, if they would, recall the strain
Which melody-throated hope sang silver-toned,
Sang low, as almost fearing, but so sweet,

My listening heart kept low its pulse to hear ;
Till love in sadness took herself the theme,
Which failing died upon hope's pallid lips.'

'Thou knowest it vain, and wherefore waste the hours
Seeking in that dead past for aught of life,
Seeking for aught amid the mouldered years?'

'Dost thou not know?

For do not parted years
Take with them in decay their withered hopes,
Their unweaned nurselings, loves, but leave behind,
Gnarled, rooted, strong, their ever-living griefs
That feed their massive strength, insatiate?
And that dark mould which once was bud of joy,
And leaf of fluttering thrill and hue, life-glad,
Dures on to feed their growing might of pain,
Which spreads its shadow forest-dark and chill
Over the change-strewn present, reft of life.
And shall this be the whole?

Is it strange thought
If memory seeks to re-inshape the mould,
And into her wan flowers, which thus she feigns
Living again, breathes odours of the past?

'Shall one in midnight starless, moonless, black,
Dream only dreams of some far dawn unknown?
How, but from memories of a sunlight past?

'Shall one, in loveless misery captive, seek
Adream for some fresh hope as yet unseen,
A heaven as yet all uncreated void,
And with such dream allay his clamorous pangs?
How, but by calling back from death awhile
A love which memory else as ashes keeps
Inurned, and lifeless ashes, *that* alone?
And if it be that when around that love,
Recalled, embrace is thrown, the bodiless shade
Gives back no answering clasp, no note of joy;
But passive takes the clasp, and lets the arms
Pass through its unsubstantial form, and close
Upon an empty breast their vain embrace;
And if perchance the voice which once was dear,
Seems but few moments waked, and but repeats
A faint, a fragmentary utterance gone,
Not living thought, not new endearment speaks,
And has but lifeless echo for its all;—

'Yet from the pain doth memory shape a joy,
A pensive joy, that has no hollow note.
For though the love whereof I dream my dream,
Is, oh! how silent on the lips of death,
Its thought recalled is as remembered prayer,
Its memory is a benediction's voice.'

II.

O mine, O loved as mine, yet never mine
In this sad life that has for end the grave,
How I have loved thee ! how I love thee still !
Too sweet perchance it was for earth, too fair,
That vision of expectancy and hope
Which offered thee as mine, a splendour dream
Told feebly by the spoken name of love.

How close, O loved, O lost, about my soul
Cling thoughts of thine, cling memories of thee ;
How penetrate to all its inner depths
My soul with what was thee, with what was thine.
The sweet illumination of thy smile
Reached shadowed depths of feelings, to all else
Responseless. And the love-note of thy laugh
Shakes memory's cenotaph of thee. Thy gaze,
When something brings it up from vanished years,
Is all whereof my soul mid many eyes
Around is conscious. Thy endearment's clasp,
Its tender sweet reserve, its happy rest,
Its melting into kiss—years pass and years,
Remembrance of it is a sweeping storm.

And all the present's voices utter 'past,'
And 'past, past, past,' the pain-pulse of the day
Beating beneath its diapason strain
Of duties, labours, cares ; and 'past, past, past,'

The pain-throb of the night like beaten drum
Amid the silence of all else but thought ;
And 'past, past, past,' the note that ever ends
The vision fugue of oft-recurring dream.

III.

'Past,' but in dream came voice that said 'to be,'
Dream like a dawn, that in the dawning came ;
I heard the voice and woke, and thou wast nigh,
A moment nigh, thou as a glory more
Than any fashioning of earth could feign,
Than any palmy thought of joy depict.

So sweet a dream, if it were yet a dream,
It was, I closed my eyes and hid the dawn,
And sought an unremembering shelter closed
To all but thought, defended from to-day ;
Defended from the many yesterdays,
Since that far yesterday when last I saw
Thy love-look, felt the love-touch of thy lips,
And heard sweet thrills in that sweet voice of love.

Shall I behold thee thus, O loved and lost ?
Thee whom the separating years withhold,
Thee when the separating years no more
Can hide as lost ? Shall I behold thee thus ?
Those lips of thine with such serener smile
Hallowed, as only an immortal joy

Could give ; thine eyes with such completer love
Speaking, as consciousness that parting more
Could never be, alone bestows ; thy face
Veiled with a radiance more than nimbus-glow
Of saintly light. Of old thy saintly soul
Looked through thy face and made its beauty more ;
This that I saw was thee transformed to soul ;
Thought's impress on thy face—how dear to me
Is its remembered nobleness—enhanced
And more ennobled still ; whatever trace
Of suffering once was there—ah ! traces were—
So sweetly changed, I knew it but as light
Of sympathetic radiance. Lines of grief,
Their sadness gone, were now immortal calm ;
And that sweet dignity of mien once thine
Was with celestial greatness glorified.

How dear to me the dream, if dream it were !
How dearer far if it be more than dream,
Prefiguring joy to be ! O loved, O lost,
Will it thus be ? Shall I behold thee thus ?
Thee thus absorbed in glory, thee so dear,
So more than dear ? There is not known the word
Which, with its sound and its suggestive thought,
Utters the gratitude, the gladness given
By such requital thine, and mine in thee.

O dear to me, O more than ever dear,
Beloved soul. The separating years

Such happy hope makes few. I see thee thus
Gifted with more than beauty, more than all
The hallowedness that gives a mortal face
Its loftiest, noblest, best. I see thee thus,
And hope is whispering in immortal tones
Of love to be, in that unknown of bliss
Whose name is heaven ; and such return of love
Proportioned to immortal years of joy
As here must be an unimagined thought,
Here in the years mortality surrounds.

I see thee thus. . . . I cannot even to thee,
To whom the stumbling utterance of my thoughts
Was ever clear, tell out my thoughts of joy,
Nor can my heart express its deep reward.

But here remaining till the years are o'er,
Taking the years and pain as gift of God,
'Tis mine to hasten on their lagging steps,
Filling their solitary wastes of days
With high-souled effort, aiding hope and thought
And faith in those to whom life's path is pain ;
Such toil as thou, magnificent of soul,
As once thou wast, now soul beatified,
If thou couldst speak wouldst bid me do as thine,

TIME

THE wrecks of nations strew thy shores, O Time,
In long, low line of matted, massed remains
Of millioned hopes and griefs, and joys and pains,
And art and mighty thought and deed sublime
Lie mingled there with things of shame and crime ;
Thy strata, years, to man's research yield stains,
Which once were plants of love and tracks of rains,
The storm-woe's drops of some long-vanished clime.
Ah, me ! what broken remains therein abide,
What shreds of even these does man's late thought
Unmask as he to brooding thought brings back
Through such poor vestiges the complex track
Of human progress, of ambitions sought,
Of conquests won, of things despair denied.

IONA

ISLE that by shelter of thy stormy sea
Seclusion gavest unto hearts that sought,
Through prayer and toil, a life no more distraught
By passions, and from harsh ambitions free,
What fancy took the regal dead to thee?
As if even death, were its cold pillow brought
Too near a throne, with fevered dreams were fraught,
Or rude wills waked its stirless apathy ;
As if the cares of state, and wiles obscure
Of dark intrigue, and fierce baronial pride,
And softened tread of treachery's stealthy feet,
Roused the dead heart to shudder, not to beat ;
And only by thy fence of storm and tide
The dreamlessness of death were made secure.

DESERTED

THEY haunted me, those eyes, they haunt me yet ;
They move not, and they change not into light,
Nor seem to notice aught, and still they smite.
Their unrelenting fixedness, hopeless, set,
Seizes upon the thought that would forget,
And holds it—seek release howe'er it might—
Fixed like a thrall in bondage shackled tight ;
In that blank gaze restraint and pain are met.
But what those eyes reveal the closed lips hide,
Sealing the history up with silent seal :
The hopeless conquest of a hope that turned
To fraud, and in her soul as poison burned ;
And time, calm healer, knew not how to heal
Save helped by steadfast will and noble pride.

PIETÀ

O FOR the chance Thy bleeding wounds to bind,
To bathe away the streams which stain Thy face,
Thy matted locks to smooth, to cleanse the trace
Their unremorseful wine hath left behind ;
To give Thy thirst a draught more pure, more kind ;
To soothe with love that anguished brow's distress,—
Nails hold Thy hands therefrom, how merciless !—
And for Thy pain-bowed head a prop to find.
Ah, years with unreturning steps forbid !
Bitter, that love can reach not back nor touch ;
Bitter, oh, bitterer still, to her that smiled
Her mother's smile when fondling Thee as child,
Whose hands, together locked in quivering clutch,
Make vain attempt at holding anguish hid.

FROM WHENCE COMETH THY HELP?

No heart for me, no love? It cannot be!
This cold of desolation gnaws my soul,
Turns joys to griefs that wail as winds which roll
Through leafless trees beside a sunless lea;
With anguish blights its buds of ecstasy,
Shrivels its thoughts to the brown leaf's parched scroll
Of withered meaning; earth-bound keeps and dull
Its powers which love's sweet sun alone could free.
Yet if, O God, it be my fate to live
With no heart near whose yearnings answer mine,
Nor love that loving me is no more lone,
Let this poor phantom of a life atone
For its shrunk efforts by a death divine;—
That one remaining compensation give!

THE OFFERING

I AM, he said, but that I seem
I have no more but that I am ;
What most the meed of love esteem,
What most its chiefest prizes deem,
Its boons, of these I naught can claim ;
I have not aught of these as mine,
If aught I had it should be thine,
Yes, thine in truth in more than name.

But what I am I give to thee,
And what I am is not the flower,
Is not the flower that seeks to be,
Is but the bud which would be free
From hueless fold and helpless hour,
But needs for any growth or hue
The light which only could endue,
The gift which only could empower.

The light is love and love the gift ;
What strength would such a gift bestow,
What power had such a light to lift
The bud upon the swaying drift

Of winds that hither thither flow,
But wandering now in sunless air,
Win nought of that they seek to bear
To yearning buds that seek to blow.

Take thou this bud, I have no more,
I am no more, and on thy breast
Let it be worn as thine, and o'er
Its longings let that sunlight pour—
Thy love. And in that sunlight blest
The bud so feeble now as mine
Will be an opened flower as thine,
And, loved by thee, attain its best.

‘FOR THE LOVE HE HAD TO HER’

WHERE desert seas, where deserts like a waste
Of sandy sea, were round, where tropic soil
Glooms o’er with canopies by trees enlaced,
Where far-off steeps seclude, his fate had placed
Through manhood’s early years his posts of toil ;
Service for science, service for his Queen,
Had kept him far from home ; but hope had spanned
Ever the years, the leagues, that lay between
His love and him ; in fancy oft her hand
He held, in fancy oft felt close the heart
Which time nor leagues from love like his could part.

But his had been the service, not the fame,
The wound of health, and not the wound of fight,
The pioneer’s rough toil and toilsome aim ;
No favouring honour crowned, nor loud acclaim,
Duty well done beyond the million’s sight.
And, when they met again, the maiden’s eye
Looked coldly on the love so deep, so true ;
The maiden’s mien was pale frigidity :
The maiden’s voice no more its love-tone knew.
Awhile his grief lay silent ’neath the blow ;
Then came his keen complaint, pathetic, low :—

'Is this *thy* voice, thus loveless, arid, cold,
Sere as the sere leaf's rustle? *thine*, once thrilled
With happy music? *thine*, that gave of old
Its rippling laugh like glistening wavelets rolled
Across the moving waters, sunset-filled?
What then could change to this impassive tone
The sweetness and the love that were too sweet,
What make of tongue of meaning tongue unknown,
An empty stream of sound like pattering feet?
This desert voice, like winds with sands for tears,
Is this then all for all the future years?

'*Thy* voice? Its cold chills like the icy breath
Of Arctic winds that, swooping on the sea,
Smite into frozen images of death
The waves that in emotion rise beneath
Their bitter lash and stern severity;
While deeply moving, like a moving deep
That moves far down with current changeless, strong,
Knowing no fluctuation and no sleep,
Bearing no turmoil and no voice along,
The yearnings for *thine* uttered love and thee
Stir mightier for the silence of their plea.

'And thus these yearnings in thy presence mould
An outer face of acquiescence staid;
Thus, near to thee, with stern demeanour cold
Themselves, as if themselves were not, they hold.

Thus are they, deeply moving, undisplayed ;
But when the hour is come, and takes its place,
Whose coming bears away that shade once thee,
And absence pictures on the blank thy face,
As once, as now, in clear lucidity,
The old, the new, the love-illumed, the stone—
I shudder through to beats of moments gone—

‘ Moments of fragmentary bliss that beat
With stronger pulse than all the crowded years
About their rapture heaped. Did lip lip meet,
And was the lip-touch all that was so sweet,
And all the bliss remembrance yet reveres?—
No ashen memory of what was not more
Could save, unscattered, through the storms that sweep
Life's decades into drifts, its tender store
Of embers of the bygone thrills, and keep
Ever alive that fire of sacred bliss,
Ever as new the sweetness of each kiss.

‘ No ! for my soul in thine a-sudden knew,
It seemed, the full response its yearnings sought ;
In thine received through unexpected view
The meaning of the past's intent, the clue
To mystic hope and half-delineate thought
And dreamt desire ; and felt the transport-leap
Of thrill, in thee beholding home and rest ;
And thou thenceforth wast need incessant, deep,

And impulse leading on to lofty quest,
To climb ideal summits and thereon
Plant beacons of a destiny nobly won.

'Is this thy face? Is this thy face veiled o'er,
As in the past with intellectual light,
That heightens all its pallid beauty more,
But shows not now the love that heretofore
Its eloquence spake? And silent, stern, and white,
Its features, changed as with the chill begun
That, when the summit of her life is past,
Upon the frozen features of a nun
Hardens, till they be rigid, marble-fast ;
Only the lengthening shadows now she knows,
Only the path to distant sunset's close.

'And I must nevermore the love-gleam see,
And nevermore in thy love's accents feel
The impulse breathed, the intrepidity,
The hope which shakes itself from doubtings free
And nerves the soul as if with nerves of steel,
Making the fated equal to his fate,
Be that fate doom of pain or conquest's bliss.
Wherefore that hope, that joy, so sweet of late,
Changed into loveless misery such as this,
And I left thus bewildered and alone,
Quivering with purpose past, with destiny gone?'

ODE TO THE SEA

WHAT ails thee, sea? Thou only yesterday
Dreamy and calm, in placid portraiture
Thy cliffs and scaurs, their outlines soft and pure,
Upon thy sheet of waters didst array,
Bent down to where thy depths of mystery lay.
Dear was the peace of thine unruffled breast,
Thy quietude of restful majesty
Sweet with absorbed serenity of heaven.
How should there dwell in that the seething leaven
Of passionate storm? why have arisen in thee
These waste remorseful ravings of unrest?

Why crumple up, morose and discontent,
Those tender images of yester morn?
And why such efforts toss with billowy scorn
About the feet of cliffs, as impotent
Confused remains of picturings, blurred and rent?
And querulously thus thine angry moan
Roll long against the cliff's unyielding height?
Thy plaint but wakens up an answering roar,
And haughty rock and scornful hollow pour
As from titanic organ notes of might
Imperious as the greatness of thine own.

What ails thee? Didst thou mark the sea-gull flaunt
And take her cry as matter for thy wrath?
What scream was hers to call thine anger forth?
Should might, disturbed by such infantile taunt,
Be chafed to effort, moody, petulant?
Or did she tell thee of aerial war
Whose distant movement robs thee of thine ease?—
Nay, sea. Thine own is restless wont that tears
Piecemeal the shuddering precipice, and bears
Its frittered wrecks to strew thine estuaries
With barren stretch of clamorous, sandy bar.

And this is then thy roar, impulsive sea!
Unceasing note of purpose ever willed,
Never relinquished, ever unfulfilled;
This is that voice thy waves bring up from thee,
The burden of thy passionate threnody.—
Is thine, then, hunger of ambition nursed
By wind-wailed legends of that ancient past
Ere quavering lightnings brought thee unto birth,
When, wrapped about with swathing bands, the earth,
In infant passion writhing, sought to cast
From her the uncertain wraps that bound her first?

And wouldst thou emulate? Or hath destiny
Purposed the manner of thy servitude,
And purposed storms as calm's predestined brood;
And not from things that were, but things to be,

Planned out the course, the travail, meant for thee?
So the wail mixed in thy triumphant roar,
Those crowded sobs, and that convulsive fall
Which ends thy wave-leaps, are as is the strife
Whereunto duty bids all human life ;
Where grief haunts deed, and pangs hold plans in thrall,
And honour claims allegiance but the more.

EUMACHIA, NAPLES

NEVER that smile those lips of beauty fail !
Never that dream depart, those pensive eyes
Dream as they ever dreamt ! Never arise
The Vandal blow whose malice would assail
That harmony of graceful folds which veil,
And yet revealing what they veil, surprise
With joy ! Beneath that veil a beauty lies
For stone's austerity almost too frail,
Almost too tender save for shadowy dream,
Such dream as mortal thought, not mortal eye,
Sees dimly 'mid the weary present glide ;
Beauty and grace and sweetness that abide
Immortal 'mid the immortals, but draw nigh
To mortal thought as only passing dream.

Did he whose dream thou wast, with sudden sigh
Gaze, when in stone create before his sight
He thee beheld, and joy so exquisite
Seize him, that in that joy's felicity
His hand grew numb, and like a fire his eye
Flashed and lost light, and then his face sank white
In death which only could his soul unite

With thine in love's immortal ecstasy?
Or did he in his noblest dream and best
See flaws, and not in love, but in despair,
Relinquish labour, fretting life away;
Hopeless again of passion to essay
Such form as thine, and too distressed to bear
The faults in thee that marred his loveliest?

What! thou no dream, but priestess? Thine abode
Pompeii? How came thence a form so fair?
How 'mid such earthliness grew grace so rare,
Such dignity of purest womanhood?
Did that new faith, the Christian's, mould thy mood,
And in thy soul its sacred concepts bear?—
I turn unto thy face; hope is not there,
And peace appears as fearing to intrude.
Then was it so, a glimmer clomb the gloom,
But reached not yet to faith's transparent ray,
Nor comprehension's spreading breadth of light,
And then the fierceness of Vesuvian night
Rained down its ashen flood, and buried day
And love and faith and hope in one wide tomb?

ODE

O YE, the great departed, ye who lift
The thoughts of men from their mortality
By joy of throbbing poesy ; by gift
Of music, upon whose entrancing drift
The listener floats to shiver or to sigh ;
By sculptor's marble thought ; or painter's spell
Of living touch ! Of ye were, oh ! how few
Whose inspiration was not for disdain
To soulless crowds ; and few were ye who knew
That life was more than sorrow, gift than pain ;
But grief, but suffering, these ye knew too well.—
By what can ye impart your deathless power
To those who would your deathless toil pursue,
Except by handing down the weary dower
Which in such ample fee was given to you ?
Thus they who seek it touch your bones and live,
And thus receive as theirs the inspiring power ye give.

To what melodious sequences those sighs,
To what deep harmonies of music, turn,
When, through your elevating touch, they rise,
Vocal and eloquent with thought's surprise,

To raptures that, without consuming, burn—
The glowing fervours of immortal flame !
Ah ! what inimitable touch of life
Hath sorrow's slaughtering power your pencil given !
With what full vigour is the marble rife
Through those deep woes by which your hearts were
 riven !
Through what weak hours to that calm strength ye
 came !—
Who seeks the wreath and who the palm would bear,
'Tis thus the palm is held, the wreath is worn.
But more than pain in that high dower has share ;
For unto such a dower alone is born
Capacity for pain that makes pain fate,
And hath the power withal to bid that pain create.

ODE TO THE GLACIER, GRINDELWALD

WHERE is thy voice, thou icy cataract?
Thou art no aphonous rush of phantom waves,
No silence of descending death in act
Of feigning ghostly turbulence that raves
Without a voice to utter forth its ire.
There should be exultation, pealing higher
Than volumed river thundering down in fall
The clamour of its deafening monotone.
No river hath such heights aerial
As thine from which in passion of desire
To leap. Thou hast for thine such steep ravine
As none but thou couldst dominate, and none
Deck with that tumult wild and yet serene;
Nor even doth the rock-bound ocean own
On its supremest shores such heights as stand
To guard thee in sublimity of might
With haughty silence of unvoiced command,
Lifting themselves towards the infinite
Above the mystery of their cloudy zone.

And ocean's billows have not hues more pure
Than those surmounted by thy moveless crests,

Which sleep in white serenity secure
From helpless tossings—what so calmly rests
Upon thy ridges were a troubled foam
If it were ocean's—but if ocean's, where
The amethyst, the opal polychrome,
Which, as in dreaming harmony, sleep there?

Where is thy voice? So measured are the throes
That rend thy breast to its abysmal deep,
It should be thunderous music, such as flows
On tidal shores where tidal billows sweep.
The avalanche, startled to its fall, roars down
Its curdling fear ; by great vicinity
Wherein inanities dissolve and drown,
Even changed to echoed grandeur from a cry ;
That utterance is not thine. Thou claimest birth
In such a realm as holds with kingly state
Ancient traditions of a mightier earth,
Which, in the strength of youthful life elate,
In upland swell of bosom region-wide
Rose like a full still tide millennium-long,
And in majestic pangs, but silent, strong,
Throbbled forth the mountain-ranges of her pride.
And thou, by this tradition penetrate,
Keepst thy movements from such hasty roar
As speaks to human ears for pulses fit
Of momentary length, that have no door
Wherethrough to recognition to admit

Pulsations such as thine, protracted, great ;
But listening thought can hear those notes of might,
That in the silence of eternity
In one great song of many songs unite,
An immemorial, an unending strain
Of pealing theme, of echoing refrain,
Song of the æons past, of those to be.

DE PROFUNDIS

O THOU who, worn with that exalted hour
Wherein Thine anguish to the throne of bliss,
Thy Father's throne, in supplication rose,
From out that sanctuary of love and power
And suffering coming met'st betrayal's kiss—
Man's answer to Thy yearning and Thy throes.

When from the precincts of a kindred pain
We too, with yearnings worn, yet fervour swayed,
Come forth and meet the false, the base, the cold,—
Coming from pain's exalted mood again
To enter into its low depths betrayed,
May we as nobly stand as Thou of old.

Unmoved by anger's suddenest surprise,
By indignation's instantaneous heat,
Unshaken from calm by taunt or bitter thought,
May we to Thine unspoiled compassion rise,
Thine uncomplaining love, resolved to meet
As Thou, not what we would, but what we ought.

WHAT SEEKEST THOU?

ABOUT yon mountain-side the sinking cloud
Enwreathes itself in sinking, chased no more
By merciless winds, but turned in slow approach
Like one whom doubts deject, whose suppliant thought
Seeks access to a throne. Access yon cloud
Has none save this: upon the mountain-foot
To pour its falling tears. Too great, too high,
Too near the blissful heaven, that steep sublime
Whereon so oft heaven's blazoning glories rest.
Nor is its access more than favour scant,
Nor may it lie before the mountain's foot
To mirror in its ready breast the throne
Its worship sought. Its destiny bears it on
In downward haste 'mid scattered rocks that brood
In fallen dignity, and with disdain
Spurning it, turn its clearness into foam,—
On, down and on, without a granted rest
Or solaced pause, till in some lowland mere
Or ocean's burial depths its waters sleep.

Ah, what persistent tale that torrent tells !
To-morrow's stream is as the stream to-day ;

To-morrow's wave will welter round the rock
Almost as does to-day's, the play of foam,
The splash, the veil of aery fall, the leap
Of thunderous cataract, and the music clear
Of trickle, little changed or changed in nought
Save if ephemeral tempest, which awhile
Rages, bring turbulent hours that pass away,
But hinder not return to wonted form :
And if perchance the winter's frozen hours
Force silence, while its storms pour requiems wild
Upon the heights which they entomb in snow,
With spring return the flow, the leap, the roar—

Return, and seem unchanged ; form, function, sound,
How steadily persistent ! Ever changed
The toiler, ever borne to destiny new,
As if the toil, and nought beyond, had worth,
As if the toil were all, the toiler nought.

Yet is there change, and no phantasmal change.
By æoned toil of many-millions waves
The mountain gorge is hewn, the valley's width
Hollowed, the emerald lake transformed to plain,
The very ocean barriered, and new shore
Forced on its shallowed waters ; one fixed course
Of gradual new creation thus outshaped
Through unremembered toils of toilers, used
For perishing efforts, and for passing end,
Then onwards forced to destiny all unknown.—

Is this remorseless method, Nature, thine?
And thou, slave-mother, mindless of thy brood—
Hast thou no pity even for the wave
Losing its pureness through its labour forced,
Or shattered, passion-driven into foam ?

O Nature, if there then were nought but thou,
Nought holding purpose greater than thine own,
Of which thou art but part and passing phase ;
Wert thou the engenderer of the life of man,
What horror's fangs might tear the living heart,
What dull despair, refusing toil and thought,
Follow, that sought for path to the unknown
Without the pains of effort, pangs of strife,
That fashion out its pathway's course to death !

But ah ! the torrent roars another tale
Than its own destiny ; ' Nature merciless '
Is not its only burden. ' Ask of Truth,'
A melancholy murmur in the roar
Rolls up : ' Is Nature's motherhood more stern,
Her bosom more remorseless, than Truth's own ?

' Who follows quest of Truth's, does Truth demand
Less from him than his all ? Does Truth regard
The *toiler* or the *toil* ? Does not she, too,
Shaping her great creations, spend the lives
Of perishing toilers, and with no regret
Upon her awful countenance, nor pain ?

‘For ask thou of result, and ask of fact :
Is not the path of Art with toilers strewn
Through Art’s imperious claims? With what cold word
Doth Science bid her pioneers go forth
To death, with what cold countenance look on
And view their dying pain? And that stern law
The law of fittest—hath it for its end
The *unit* or the *plan*, the *path* or *goal*?

‘Nay, ask thou yet again of fact and hope :
Do not the hearts that worthily attain
Count loss and labour nought, and even regard
As nought the suffering of a branded name,
If they may yet some worthy end of Truth
Secure, if but create embodiment
Of some high thought ; to Truth’s imperial cause
Devoted in the unyielding pain of love?

‘And ask thou yet once more of faith and fact :
If there be creed that has inspiring power,
Lift but its clear emblazonment to lead ;
And flame, nor rack, nor hopeless dungeon’s dark
Will quell devotion’s rapture, break its power,
Or touch the strength that overmasters pain.

‘Ask, ask again of motherhood and life :
For in the attempt to still her infant’s pain,
Unconscious of her ebbing strength, will oft
The mother court irrevocable doom.

'And if there be an end for which men bear
Suffering, or end through suffering won, though small,
'Tis thereby changed and magnified to great.

'So storms their glorious purples lend to hills
Which next they mean to lacerate ; so weeks
Whose heavens hung heavy, weary, dark, and low,
O'er day's despair, in one last evening's blaze,
Transfigured into splendour, pass away.

'The tale of all is one. From those who seek,
As aspiration's aim, Truth's realm of thought
Or Art's imaginings to Nature true ;
From those who by nobility of deed
Weave truth and fact to one ; from those who hold
The inspiration of a faith ; nay more,
From simplest fact of motherhood, Truth claims
The pain of toil, the pain of sacrifice,
That they who toil, as hers alone should toil,
Her instruments, hers only, not their own,
Themselves regarding nought, but their toil all.
In this one limitation is she stern,
But limitless in chance and offered quest
Afforded to a willing toiler's will—
Truth, throned alike on primal cause and steep,
On region wide-horized to its bound,
On final aim, and that deep's mystery
Whereunto laden ages bear their all,
Wherein new destinies embryonic sleep.

‘The pain of toil and pain of sacrifice
She claims, inexorable in demand ;
And whoso falters, whoso turns his back
Upon the suffering and the toil, is lost
To her and hope. And whoso effortless
In this exists, her eyes disdainingly pass
As scarce attaining veritable life.’

Is it then so? But there be those to whom
Fulfilment and the way of toil are barred
By suffering, hearts no less than others full
With yearning for the quest marked out for aim,
Yet thus forbidden. Such lives can know no thrill
Of victory’s passion lending scope and strength,
Nor aught but pale endurance, facing pain,
Is theirs,—not long endeavour, Truth’s demand,
And no assiduous thought nor laboured search.
What hope for these? what part in any quest?
What more than under hood-closed ambulance-car
Being through life conveyed to life’s last pain?

Ah me! Full oft may these to all around
Turn, and no comfort gain, assurance none ;
Full oft may question Reason, but in vain :
For them hath Reason no smile, and hath no aid,
Reason, pure Intellect’s solitary child.

Nor deem that these alone such burdened lot
Sustain, these whom impassioned yearnings keep

In fruition's sadness. They be few
Perchance amid the multitude that bear
Life's heavy load and drag their fettered limbs
Beneath its weary burden to the end.
A multitudinous voice of many tones
Commingled into one I seem to hear
Asking of Reason, asking all for nought,
The meaning and the mystery of all.

I hear—I heard ; I looked. I seemed to stand
'Mid scenery strange for mortal eye to see,
On pathway strange for mortal foot to tread,
And Reason was seated in that shadowy realm
As one in thought. And Faith beside her sat,
And from the earth the impassioned cry arose,
And Reason a moment closed her eyes and sobbed
Her pain. Not hers the help which suffering needs ;
She felt it, felt that she no secret knows
Whereby to solve the mystery of pain
Or pallid fruition's hopeless end ;
She can unfold the process,—where it leads,
Or whence it rose, or why, she cannot say,
Nor can she give suggestion's soothing hint,
And unto suffering's piteous questions gives
Vague silence only. And the realm she knows
Has rung with earnest questioning, and rung
With seeming empty echo's sad reply ;
And in the silence gains that echo voice,
The clearer and the sadder dying low.

But Faith, aroused by such forlorn appeal,
Looked into Reason's face and saw her pain,
And listened long. So silent all the realm
To aught but that returning echo's notes ;
'*Meaning must be,*' the dim assurance comes,
'*In such mysterious silence ; such return*
Meaning must have though Reason knows it not.'
And Intuition, Instinct's speaking child,
Though born of mother dumb, mother whose lips,
If voiced, might give to Reason's self an aid,
Uttered to Faith a half-heard thought and passed.

But I beheld. And Reason pallid rose,
As one whom pain hath brought to deep resolve,
And looked around, and once again set forth
In self-reliance calm, with measured step
And features fixed, with purpose to explore,
And once again in all horizons seek
The meaning not yet found and cause unseen.
Forward she went and uncompanied went,
As who the depths unknown and slippery steeps
And sweeping storm might face with fearless front,
And stand before the murderous missile thrown,
And even from foes force homage as a queen,
And seek in accurate survey what she seeks.

She on her rigid sequences relies
As means, and gives the survey, but not more,
Nor can she more. The survey has not all.

She plots the plan ; she maps. But where the dawns,
The clouds, the skies ? Maps she the songs sent up
Where melting hues on foam-curved rivers rest ?
Where be the strains the lulling breezes sing
To listening pines ? where mapped the rolling might
Of tempest's organ-peal from rock to rock
Reverberating ? and where the silence hung
About the mountain's topmost brow of snow,
Silence more ancient than creation's birth,
Sole relic of a lost eternity ?

But heights too steep there be, and tides too strong,
And coursing torrents deep. Weary and faint,
At length, with vision dimmed, she finds her bourn,
Where shifting sands are round uncertain heights,
And only half revealed ; and swaying gulf,
And deepening depth, and cloudland new and strange,
And mists that wander vaguely round the whole.

Pale regal maid ! to Faith's inspiring flow
Admit thy will. Nor thou condemn the aid
Of Instinct's memory, mute, unconscious, dim ;
It is her heritage from long descent
Of æoned immemorial ancestries,
The link which binds her unto being's truth,
To that which is, to actuality ;
Hence knows she right as right and truth as truth.

Scorn them not, and by aid of these thy glance

Will once again resume its eagle strength,
And shapeless dark and cloud show features new
Of solid ground beneath their wandering mist,
And thou, recruited by the aid received,
Track realms that else to thee are regionless.

She listens not, and comes despondent back ;
For all is mystery still. No evil's cause,
No evil's meaning, clear ; and silences
And dearths are they to which the steps of love,
Herself unwitting, often lead ; and hearts,
Barren as desert sand absorb her all
In fruitless waste. Mystery is all,—nor scope
Of that which is, nor plan, has Reason found.

And Faith beholds, and sees her sister's pain,
And goes herself to search, and searches long,
For any clue or hope—with, oh, how wan
At times a face, and, oh, how weary eye !
But finds around her pathless steeps and space
Trackless, and bourns that vanish, midnights closed
And black, and wandering marshlights error-lit.

Must she like Reason fail ?

A moving wind,

A passionate cry from suffering, wanders up ;
She presses on, but, ah ! discovers late
How vague, except with Reason, her sister, near,
Her steps, and how uncertain path she treads.

Yet still, consoled by thoughts which her console,
But can to Reason never solace bring,
She tracks whatever path would seem to lead
To survey and to hope.

Nor deem her search
A hopeless wandering, wandering wholly vain.

For if she reach, even wandering so, at length
That pure inspiring air of heavenward way
By breath of which her splendid strength she gains
Nobly to act, nor nobly less endure,
Her progress is not vain nor labour lost,
Nor comes she back, but has, like him of old,
A halo gained upon the mount of God.

And what she has she unto suffering speaks.
No perfect tale, no mystery all unrolled,
But in a tone like whispers in the night,
That float from love to swoon-dim hearing roused,
Such as she has she whispers to her ear,
So still, so clear, that suffering even sees
The tenuous glow of half-arisen hope
Lighting the dark horizon of her soul.

Thus comes to suffering all unseen at times
A chastened joy ; thus comes a hallowed voice
To the hushed soul in sorrowing reverence bent
To make itself and all its anguish prayer,
And speaks when nought but fruition's moan

Is else amidst its dark, and speaks to thought,
And shows pale tints of light seen dim afar
Above the gloomy gorge of time and gloom
Of its oppressive night and hopeless way.

So be it. If achievement meets its meed,
Achievement has its compensation thus ;
And be that meed not joy, but even pain,
'Tis still triumphant pain. If it be Truth,
For which the struggler, wounded, sinks, the meed
Is yet in some sort compensation's meed ;
For he who in Truth's colours folded dies
May die alone and far from friendly cheer ;
He quells mortality even in unknown death.
The toiler dies in sooth, but of his toil
Truth weaves a web of immortality.

So be it too. For pleasure sates its day ;
Success and gain have their reward ; and power ;
They have no night of heaven to light with fire
Of hope's unrisen sun ; they know no need
To seek for aught beyond the seen, the known :
For them fruition has its present joy.

But other destiny of hope afar
Is that which suffering needs that here has none ;
Beyond the horizon of the known the hope
Must be, and in the unseen, from which those hints,
Those glimmers, come, a sempiternal hope,

Dream now perchance, but not hereafter dream,
Beyond the bourn of life. Through vision such
Her weary limbs gain vigour to tread on
With stately step towards her pathway's end.

Nor thou, if Faith's assumptions seem to thee
Fancy or argument of childlike dream,
Scoff. Man is as a gazer unto whom
The landscape never shows at once its all ;—
A mist floats o'er—lo revelations new
Of line and range, and pall of gloomy day
And level sun reveal new features, hidden
In noon's unclouded brightness : varying light
In varying slope alone reveals the whole.

Nor thou forbid that Faith, from sudden flash
Of fire in sorrow's storm striking athwart
The gloom, from gleams like moonlight gleam of rest
In pain, from inspiration's glowing morn,
From steady day and even from clouded heaven,
Gather what helps she may for suffering's cheer.

Nor thou demur if from the echoed cry,
So hopelessly returned, she augurs hope.
The words, half caught from Intuition's lips,
Offered suggestion which the maid had learnt
From her mute mother even through voiceless sign ;
For down the myriad æons, change what change,
Perish what perish, rise whatever rise,

Creation's unbeheld foundations dure
Imperishable ; in themselves unchanged,
Atom and force and working ; nor were this,
Nor could it be, if Truth were aught but Truth,
If Truth were less, nor justice part of Truth ;
Yet is not justice here, nor aught affords
A scope or means for compensation's plan.
And all the weary ages down hath rung
Uncompensated suffering's bitter cry.

Yet Truth is Truth, and justice ever Truth's.

Then must the compensation be to come
Beyond the horizoned rim of life and Time.

II.

'Dream, dreamer, if thou wilt,' I hear a voice,
'But deem not argument is in thy dream ;
Thy fancy soothe thy pain ; thy faith, if faith
It be, give vistas sunny for the view
Thy windowed thoughts and longing heart behold.
I yield me not to any instinct mute
Nor to emotion's auguries and dreams ;
But Reason, but Intellect, I trust alone.'

Thou yield'st thee not to any Instinct mute
Nor to emotion's auguries and dreams ;

It is not *I* would bid thee yield to these
As if they were the whole, and Intellect
Were not supreme, nor held controlling sway.
I would but have thee give position due
To these where Intellect claims it not, nor can ;
But if thou deemest Intellect surer guide
To truth of life when she keeps Faith afar,
Bethink thee what thou deemest.

Is there yet

A science or an art that doth not rest
Its ultimate piers on ground, assumption's ground,
Whose bedded rock, whatever name thou give,
Is not a faith ?

And know that there be those

In whom the Intellect is clear light ; but life,
Wide day, spread cold o'er winter's ice, that knows
No melting tear ; and frozen gems and hard,
Recalled when offered up, are all that might,
If generous dew, be steam of sacrifice,
Compassion's gift ; self-locked their icy life.

And there be those to whom their duller day
Of Intellect brings but shadow even in noon ;
Its welkin narrowed ; no clear rise of morn,
No evening's trophied ray it hath ; its night
No moon. But Faith, beneath those clouded skies,
Supplies a light which glorifies the heart
Through duty done and truth of life attained.—

If these to whom their intellectual light
Is filtered sheen, not day's transparent glow,
To love's nobility and exalted deeds
Attain, thereto by Faith's unreasoned aid
Or even hallucination helped, such light,
Such aid, wilt thou account as error's aid?
Has Truth no byways? Is her surfaced realm
Cramped to dimension only of a line?
Or wouldst thou fence the precincts of that mount
Of holy deed with scorn's forbidding bar?—
Truth's path, though it be deviate, ends in Truth,
And tangle but prolongs its winding length.

But others yet there be. Like torrid day
Is Intellect theirs, a clearness fiercely lit,
And all but pain. Its shadows sharp defined
Allay its strain with only wildering dark;
'Mid ray and shade alike doth Reason entreat
Relief in vain. Too clear in all she sees
Contrast. Too keen, and all too vivid glares,
Too darkened lies, before her sight the scene
Of human misery and human pain.

And with what voice save Faith's couldst thou relieve
Such misery, or suggested hints of Faith's?

'These are not all; the glowing heaven and scene,
Shadow and awful light—these are not all:
They are but phase alone, and phase of scene

Which is itself a surface, and no more,
Unto subsistence mystic, and as yet
Unknown. But more than her appearances,
More than her surface, thou deem Truth to be.
From what thou seest—the love, the hope, the pain,
The blight, the evil, which as heat and glare
Or scudding tumults o'er the surface stray
Of Truth's great realm—from these judge not Truth's all ;
She has a shakeless might of rock below,
And ocean deeps that all unmoved remain,
And, great in calm, with age-long toil imbed
The worn effects of all her surfaced throes,
And mould the adjusted issues to result
New wrought, which sleeps till some new throe shall leap
Through all existence, and uplift the new
And merge the old, or till, on some last shore
Eterne, some sequence last of sequences,
Lay down the whole that all in turn have wrought.'

Or wouldst thou even forbid such hints of Faith's—
When woe, weal's scorn, mars all in human life ;
And even intent of good leaves oft as track
Its own soiled prints behind ; and fences hedge
To narrow range the thoughts of earnest zeal ;
And leprous white too oft o'ercreeps the form
Which holds the agonising soul of good ?
But evil, in fascination's form infleshed,
Captures ; and Error, unremitting, works

Her harmful work ; and Learning, calm and great,
Is cold control of effort, for she sits
Without the narrow den where paltry thoughts
And fancies hang on walls of ignorance.
And wonder asks if fault, like bedded rocks,
Rends all the fabric of creation's plan ;
If love be love, or its Creator more
Then cold disdainer of the inweaved woes
Creation holds, or love be love in truth,
And evil holds Omnipotence in thrall ?

Wouldst thou forbid, or give reply that stuns ?

For Truth is absolute ; and Faith but knows
Phases and forms and voices, in what way
Related to the absolute, from her
Is hid ; and Reason in the forms beholds
But shadows, and the voices are to her
Mute movements of mute lips. Wouldst thou bring
light
Like sudden lightnings, voice like thunder roar,
The awful vigour of the absolute,
Into the shuddering soul ?

One beam that shows,
Though in mirage, some fair existent scene
Horizon-hid, is more than blinding light
And glooms that intervene, and sound, though dull,
If it be but interpretable tongue

Better than notes that bring no meaning near,
Better than voice that speaks in tongue unknown.

And such a light is given, and such a voice.

For One endowed with suffering came, Whose ken
Was more than prophet's ken, Who looked on life
And knew from doubtful mist the outlines sure
Of truths that even to prophet's eyes were dim,
Truths that pertain unto eternities.

In Him the darkest gloom of darkest doubt
Forced its own anguish to become as light ;
In Him the bitter 'wherefore,' bursting forth
As welling blood from wound, roused up the prayer
Of trustful love. And even despair in Him
Wrought hope's lit landscape from its gulf of night.

Born He to face as other never faced
Evil's unsolved enigma cloaking love ;
To know as never other knew, nor can,
The seeming waste of life and love and power
And duty placed where they may never thrive
Nor ever throve. His will devised the thought,
The plan, by which to penetrate the dark
Whereinsoe'er 'tis penetrable dark
For man ; and not by Reason's sole employ,
But argument intuitive, and Faith,
And deed of love performed, and meed of pain

To love returned when blood-sweat blent with thorns
Its awful stain upon that Holy Brow,
And criminal's death adjudged to purest life ;
Through these He lit the dark : He dowered the soul
With that new sense which enters realms unseen.

Suffices and suffice the dawn He showed—
Suffices and suffice ; none other yet
Has shown a dawn beyond the fathomless gulf,
A dawn whose glow can bridge with glimmering path
Its awful deep for hope's ethereal feet.

Suffices and suffice to give the thrill
Of pure devotion, selfless use of self—
Not nullity of immolated power—
But selfless use of self whose growing strength
Increases to an immortality.

That light suffice, *that* dawn. The mountain-top,
Whereto the soul is led, whereto hope leads,
Stands like ineffable dream in hallowed light
Whose day is sundered yet from man and life
By chasmal night that glooms the gulf between.

NOTES

1. *Asgard*, home or close of the gods.

2. *Valkyries*, maidens, messengers of Odin to ride before him in war and choose the spirits they wished to convey to Valhalla, in other words to settle who was to fall in battle. Below, Frigg would be strictly more accurate than Freya; but, fortunately for euphony, some confusion between the two names exists in the legends, which permits the use of the more musical Freya.

3. *Loki*, brother of Odin and Thor, punished for his crimes by being bound below an adder, whose jaw dropped poison on his face to torture it. But Sigyn, Loki's wife, held above him a dish to catch the poison. Only when she removed it to empty it did the poison reach Loki, whose shudders then shook the world.

4. *Baldur the Fair*, god of light, holy and beloved of gods and men, slain through Loki's treacherous contrivance, who deceived blind Hödur into flinging at him a dart made of mistletoe branch, the only thing which could injure him.

5. *Jotuns*, primæval giants (forces of nature), enemies of gods and men. Muspel, a Jotun, not himself evil, but father of an evil progeny.

6. *Surtur*, fire-giant, ruler over Muspel's flame progeny.

7. *Fenris*, progeny of Loki, not of Sigyn. A monster like a wolf, and terror of the gods.

For the purposes of the poem there was no need to attempt a separation of the different strata of legend of which the Northern mythology is composed.

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